

physical access  
internal customer information  
choice consultation  
quality service standards + evaluation  
equality/diversity complaints  
better co-ordination timeliness  
appeals + courtesy  
official languages equality

# Quality Customer Service Action Plan 2005-2007



DEPARTMENT  
OF HEALTH AND  
CHILDREN  
AN ROINN  
SLAINTE AGUS LEANAÍ



## Contents

	<b>Page</b>
■ Foreword by the Secretary General	2
■ Mission Statement	3
■ Our Role	4
■ Our Customers	5
■ The 12 Principles of Quality Customer Service	6
■ Implementing the Principles of Quality Customer Service	8
■ Appendix I – Quality Customer Service Liaison Officers	19
■ Appendix II – Consultation with External Customers	20
■ Appendix III – Review of Progress of Customer Service Action Plan 2003-2004	23
■ Appendix IV – Department of Health and Children Customer Charter	32
■ Appendix V – Internal Customer Protocol	34
■ Appendix VI – DOHC Customer Complaints and Appeals Procedure	37
■ Appendix VII – Principal Contact Points	40

## Foreword by the Secretary General

I am pleased to present this Quality Customer Service Action Plan which has been prepared within the framework of the Government's Quality Customer Service (QCS) initiative. A commitment to excellent customer service is a fundamental theme of the public service modernisation programme and the Department of Health and Children aims to deliver a quality customer service to all its customers.

As part of the Health Service Reform Programme, the Department of Health and Children is entering into a period major change. In this context, it is crucial that we maintain a clear focus on identifying and meeting the needs and expectations of our customers. This action plan enables us to do this by setting challenging standards, measuring performance and mainstreaming customer service into the day to day activities of the Department.

The plan builds on progress made since the first action plan was introduced in 2003. Key initiatives under that plan included our Customer Charter which was published in March 2004 and procedures for handling Customer Complaints and Appeals.

This plan was produced in association with the Customer Service Liaison Officers and the Department's Partnership Committee. It aims to improve further on initiatives in the last Action Plan and will embed the principles of quality customer service into the restructured Department. Its ongoing implementation will be led by the Liaison Officers who will have the full support of the Department's management team. Progress on implementing the plan will be reported in the Department's Annual Report.

In conclusion I would like to thank the staff of my Department for their ongoing commitment to customer service and their enthusiasm as we face a challenging future.

Michael Scanlan  
Secretary General

June 2005

## Mission Statement

The mission of the Department of Health and Children is:

*“To enhance the health and well-being of all by*

- *leading change in the health system*
- *promoting the development of high quality, equitable and efficient health and personal social services and*
- *putting health at the centre of public policy.”*

## Our Role

The Department is making major changes on how it is organised to meet its new role following the Government reform programme and the establishment of the Health Service Executive (HSE). We are moving to a strategic policy and evaluation role, while the day to day running of the Health Service will be the responsibility of the HSE.

Our role is to support the Minister and the democratic process by:

- Assisting in the formulation of policy underpinned by an evidence-based approach and providing direction on national health priorities ensuring that quality and value for money are enhanced through the implementation of an evidence-based approach underpinned by monitoring and evaluation.
- Protecting the interests of patients and consumers, and supporting practitioners and professionals to practice to the highest standards by providing a prudent and appropriate regulatory framework.
- Providing effective stewardship over health resources by demanding accountability for achieving outcomes including financial, managerial and clinical accountability, and by providing the frameworks, including enhanced service planning at national level to improve the overall governance of the health system.
- Fulfilling our obligations in relation to EU, WHO, Council of Europe and other international bodies and the continued implementation of the co-operation agenda decided by the North-South Ministerial Council.

## Our Customers

### External Customers

The Department has a wide range of external customers and is committed to providing a quality service to meet their individual needs.

- **General Public:** This includes members of the public who may or may not have previously contacted the Department of Health and Children but are interested in knowing that if they ever need to they will be treated in a fair and equitable manner. This group also includes members of the media, teachers and school children.
- **Public Representatives and members of the Oireachtas.**
- **Other public servants and officials of International Organisations:** Including staff of other Government Departments and Offices, the Health Service Executive, the Health Information and Quality Authority, Voluntary Sector Organisations, other Health Agencies, Trade Unions, officials of the European Union and officials of International Organisations.
- **Special Interest Groups:** Such as groups representing a specific health interest.

### Internal Customer

Department of Health and Children staff are customers of each other and it is important that the internal customer is acknowledged (See Principle 12 in following section).

An overview of our main customers:



## The 12 Principles of Quality Customer Service

For Customers and Clients of the Public Service

**In their dealings with the public, Civil Service Departments and Public Service Offices will adhere to the following Principles of Quality Customer Service as approved by the Government:**

### 1. Quality Service Standards

Publish a statement that outlines the nature and quality of service which customers can expect, and display it prominently at the point of service delivery.

### 2. Equality/Diversity

Ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation, and accommodate diversity, so as to contribute to equality for the groups covered by the equality legislation (under the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community).

Identify and work to eliminate barriers to access to services for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, and for those facing geographic barriers to services.

### 3. Physical Access

Provide clean, accessible public offices that ensure privacy, comply with occupational and safety standards and, as part of this, facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.

### 4. Information

Take 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. Ensure that the potential offered by Information Technology is fully availed of and that the information available on public service websites follows the guidelines on web publication.

Continue the drive for simplification of rules, regulations, forms, information leaflets and procedures.

### 5. Timeliness and Courtesy

Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer.

Give contact names in all communications to ensure ease of ongoing transactions.

## **6. Complaints**

Maintain a well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided.

## **7. Appeals**

Similarly, maintain a formalised, well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services.

## **8. Consultation and Evaluation**

Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services. Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.

## **9. Choice**

Provide choice, where feasible, in service delivery including payment methods, location of contact points, opening hours and delivery times. Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice, and quality of delivery.

## **10. Official Languages Equality**

Provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

## **11. Better Co-ordination**

Foster a more coordinated and integrated approach to delivery of public services.

## **12. Internal Customer**

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

## Implementing the Principles of Quality Customer Service

A key objective of the Department of Health and Children is the achievement of a high standard of quality customer services.

The Department will progress the implementation of the 12 Principles of Quality Customer Services over the lifespan of this Action Plan. The following specific actions will be undertaken by the Department to help ensure an improvement in customer services over the period of this plan.

### 1. Quality Service Standards

*Publish a statement that outlines the nature and quality of service which customers can expect, and display it prominently at the point of service delivery.*

The Department is committed to providing a high quality service to all our customers. The Customer Charter (Appendix V) sets out the standards which the Department is committed to achieving in the delivery of its service. These standards in the Charter will be monitored and reported on over the course of this Action Plan.

#### Actions

- Make the Department's Customer Charter widely available
- Publish the Department's Customer Charter and Customer Service Action Plan on the Department's website
- Display the Customer Charter posters in reception areas to advise customers of the standards they can expect to receive
- Ensure all staff have a copy of the Customer Action Plan and are aware of its contents
- Make the Customer Action Plan available to any customer who wishes to have a copy
- Continue to include Quality Customer Service in induction training to our staff

#### Performance Indicators

- Customer Charter displayed in reception areas
- Customer Charter and Customer Service Action Plan on website
- Improved awareness of QCS by staff monitored via survey

## 2. Equality/Diversity

*Ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation, and accommodate diversity, so as to contribute to equality for the groups covered by the equality legislation (under the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community).*

*Identify and work to eliminate barriers to access to services for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, and for those facing geographic barriers to services.*

The Department is committed to treating all our customers equally. We will seek to make suitable provision to ensure equality of access to our services.

### Actions

- Observe the rights to equal treatment established by the Equal Status Act, 2000
- Ensure that the diverse needs of customers are recognised by raising awareness among Departmental staff through training and information sessions
- Address the needs of relevant groups when formulating policy e.g. disability groups, mental health groups, etc.
- Develop a Department Equality Action Plan
- Maintain and improve, if possible, compliance with the Government's employment target of 3% for disabled staff. This is dependent on assignments from the Commission in line with vacancies at any given time
- Monitor equality of opportunity for all staff
- Continue to promote the availability of family friendly schemes for all staff

### Performance Indicators

- Number of staff attending training/information sessions
- Equality Action Plan published
- Target reached regarding employment of disabled staff
- Number of complaints received regarding equality and diversity to monitor trends
- Statistical database capturing equality statistics set up and regular statistical analysis undertaken

### 3. Physical Access

*Provide clean, accessible public offices that ensure privacy, comply with occupational and safety standards and, as part of this, facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.*

The Department is committed to ensuring that our offices are clean and safe and facilitate access for people with special needs or disabilities.

#### **Actions**

- Maintain our accommodation to a standard acceptable to both customers and staff
- Ensure that physical access will be a priority for offices of the Department
- Provide accessible public offices including ramps where necessary, wheelchair accessible entrance and suitable lifts
- Ensure that up-to-date Health and Safety Statements are in place for all the Department's offices
- Comply with Health and Safety requirements

#### **Performance Indicators**

- Public offices accessible
- Up-to-date Health and Safety Statements in place for all offices of the Department
- Monitor number of complaints received regarding physical access and standard of accommodation

## 4. Information

*Take 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.*

*Ensure that the potential offered by Information Technology is fully availed of and that the information available on public service websites follows the guidelines on web publication.*

*Continue the drive for simplification of rules, regulations, forms, information leaflets and procedures.*

The Department is committed to providing its customers with up-to-date, clear and accurate information. Material published by the Department is available on our website ([www.dohc.ie](http://www.dohc.ie)) or through contacting the Department (contact numbers in Appendix VII).

### Actions

- Develop the Department's internal communications, in particular through the use of the intranet and briefing sessions
- Ensure Department's website and intranet are kept current and up-to-date
- Provide easily accessible information on the work of the Department through the publication of Annual Reports and other publications
- Ensure relevant publications are available in Braille and large print if requested
- Ensure information is communicated in clear, easy to understand language
- Ensure that Departmental information on OASIS<sup>1</sup> is kept up-to-date
- Continue to have health promotion material easily available in reception areas
- Ensure information is available on restructured health system
- Review forms and information leaflets to ensure they are clearly written and easily understood

### Performance Indicators

- Website and intranet updated regularly
- Satisfaction from users of OASIS
- Customers specific requirements regarding publications are met
- Monitor number of complaints received regarding availability of information
- Communications programme regarding restructured health system in place

<sup>1</sup> OASIS – Online Access to Services, Information and Support is an eGovernment website developed by Comhairle which provides information on the social and civil rights of everyone in Ireland.

## 5. Timeliness and Courtesy

*To deliver services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer.*

*Give contact names in all communications to ensure ease of ongoing transactions.*

The Department is committed to dealing with all our customers in a courteous and sensitive manner and with minimum delay. Guidelines have been issued to all staff in relation to handling telephone and personal callers. The Customer Charter outlines our commitments with regard to timeliness.

### Actions

- Continue to deal promptly with requests for publications
- Continue to ensure that staff give their name and section when answering the telephone
- Provide contact details on written correspondence
- Meet our commitments under the Customer Charter
  - We will seek to respond to letters within 15 working days of receipt and keep the customer informed of progress should any delay arise
  - We will answer telephone calls within 20 seconds in a courteous manner
- Fully implement the correspondence tracking system in each section to ensure effective monitoring of compliance with our Charter commitments

### Performance Indicators

- Use of data from the correspondence tracking system to monitor and evaluate our Charter commitment regarding response to letters
- Monitor performance through analysis of completed comment cards
- Monitor number of complaints received in relation to timeliness and courtesy

## 6. Complaints

*Maintain a well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system for dealing with complaints about the quality of services provided.*

and

## 7. Appeals

*Similarly, maintain a formalised, well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to service.*

The Department is committed to delivering a high quality service to customers. However, we recognise that occasions may arise when a customer is dissatisfied with how he or she has been dealt with. The Department has a Complaints and Appeals Procedure in place (Appendix VI). The Complaints Procedure covers complaints about issues such as delays, mistakes and poor customer service. The Complaints Procedure **does not** cover matters of policy, complaints relating to a hospital or a health agency, matters which are the subject to litigation or matters which have been referred to the Ombudsman or the Information Commissioner.

Making a complaint using the Complaints Procedure does not remove the customer's right to complain at any stage to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will normally expect customers to use the Department's Complaints Procedure before accepting a complaint. Contact details for the Office of the Ombudsman are detailed in the Complaints Procedure (Appendix VI).

### Actions

- Continue to operate a Complaints and Appeals Procedure
- Continue to deal with complaints and appeals in a fair and impartial manner
- Publicise the Complaints and Appeals Procedure
- Review complaints to ensure that errors are rectified
- Provide training to staff on handling customer complaints

### Performance Indicators

- Complaints Officer and Appeals Officer in place
- Analyse, monitor and publish number of complaints and appeals
- Complaints and Appeals Procedure on website and easily available to customers

## 8. Consultation and Evaluation

*Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services.*

*Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.*

The Department is committed to ensuring that the voices of patients, clients and staff are heard in the planning and delivery of health and personal social services. The Department is committed to consulting with its customers and creating opportunities for input to the policy formulation and implementation process. Since 2002, the Minister for Health and Children has hosted a broadly based Consultative Forum on the Health Strategy comprising of key stakeholders in the health system. The Health Act, 2004 provided for the establishment of a National Health Consultative Forum to advise the Minister on matters relating to the provision of health and personal social services.

The Department acknowledges that feedback from customers is vital for the improvement of customer services and to ensure that it meets customers' needs. It is also necessary to monitor and evaluate the service delivered to customers. The Department is committed to continuing and enhancing the procedures already in place for consultation and evaluation.

### **Actions:**

- Continue to have comment cards available in public reception areas
- Conduct a survey of customers in relation to our service
- Consult with staff via the QCS Liaison Officer Network and Partnership
- Use telephone system to monitor telephone response rate
- Monitor response rates to correspondence via the correspondence tracking system
- Continue to provide opportunities for consultation in the formulation and implementation of policy
- Seek to further improve our communications and consultative processes over the period of this plan

### **Performance Indicators:**

- Level of satisfaction from comment cards
- Survey conducted and results analysed
- Response rates to correspondence from the correspondence tracking system
- Response rates for telephone calls

## 9. Choice

*Provide choice, where feasible, in service delivery including payment methods, location of contact points, opening hours and delivery times.*

*Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice, and quality of delivery.*

The Department is committed to giving customers as much choice as possible. For example, the modernisation of the Civil Registration System is resulting in considerable improvements in the quality of service to customers both in terms of the simplification of the application process and the speed of delivery of services.

### **Actions:**

- Examine new technology in order to develop alternative ways of interacting with the Department
- Make more information available electronically through the website and e-mail
- Provide facility to order birth, marriage and death certificates via the internet
- Develop a new General Register Office public electronic research facility in Dublin.
- Continue to have the Customer Service Desk and General Register Office open at lunchtime

### **Performance Indicators:**

- Public offices open at lunchtime
- Publications available on website
- New General Register Office public research facility in Dublin
- Facility in place to purchase birth, marriage and death certificates online

## 10. Official Languages Equality

*Provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.*

The Department is committed to providing quality services in Irish to customers who wish to deal with the Department in Irish.

### Actions

- Correspondence which has been received in Irish will be answered in Irish
- We will make every effort to accommodate customers who telephone or visit the Department and who wish to conduct their business in Irish
- Fulfil our obligations under the Official Languages Act, 2003
- Prepare and implement a scheme under Section 11 of the Official Languages Act which will ensure that there is enhanced provision both in the range and level of services through Irish
- Continue to provide information in Irish on the Department's website
- Update the list of staff who are able and willing to deal with customers through Irish
- Provide appropriate Irish language training to staff
- Encourage uptake of Irish language training courses by staff
- Monitor requests for service in Irish to ensure that resources can be targeted most effectively

### Performance Indicators

- Official Languages Act, 2003 obligations fulfilled
- Updated list of staff who can deal with customers through Irish
- Information in Irish on website

## 11. Better Co-ordination

*Foster a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to delivery of public services.*

The Department is committed to providing a co-ordinated and improved service to our customers. For example, the Department already works closely with a number of other Government Departments and Health Agencies. The staff of the National Children's Office are drawn from a number of Departments which are closely involved in the implementation of the National Children's Strategy. The Department is also closely involved with the Department of Social & Family Affairs, particularly in regard to the modernisation of the Civil Registration Service. In addition, the General Register Office is working closely with REACH<sup>2</sup> in the further development of eGovernment initiatives, including electronic exchange of information with other government departments and agencies.

### Actions

- Continue with the Civil Registration Modernisation Programme in conjunction with the Department of Social & Family Affairs
- Contribute effectively to and benefit from developments under the eGovernment Public Services Broker (REACH)
- Continue to co-operate and liaise with other health agencies at both national and international level
- Continue to participate in the eGovernment strategy
- Participate in various inter-departmental and inter-divisional groups
- Continue to deliver on our commitments to the Public Sector Modernisation Programme

### Performance Indicators

- General Register Office modernisation targets met as per project plan
- Involvement in eGovernment projects

<sup>2</sup> REACH is an agency established by the Government to develop a strategy for the integration of public services and to develop and implement the framework for electronic government. Reach is mandated to procure and build the Public Services Broker which is an integrated set of processes, systems and procedures designed to provide a standard means of access to public services.

## 12. Internal Customer

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

The staff of the Department are a key resource. A high standard of internal customer service is vital for the efficient working of the Department and to enable staff to do their job. Staff need services from their colleagues in order to carry out their work. An internal customer protocol was developed and circulated which outlines standards for dealing with colleagues (Appendix V).

### Actions

- Continue to include internal customer module on all customer service training/induction courses
- Continue to encourage staff development including staff training through PMDS
- Establish a HR Implementation Team to oversee the implementation of the Department's Human Resources Policy
- Promote internal customer initiatives throughout the Department via the Quality Customer Service Liaison Officer Group
- Continue the publication of the Staff Magazine
- Survey members of staff on the standard of service provided to them to allow them to accomplish their day-to-day business and ascertain how this can be improved
- Continue to provide a range of family-friendly work options for our staff including worksharing, term-time leave and flexi-time. Examine the options regarding a teleworking pilot
- Examine options for guidelines/training supports for line managers to assist with staff management
- Introduce improved systems for dissemination of HR information
- Issue regular newsletters to staff on the Health Service Reform Programme
- Continue to ensure awareness of the staff welfare service provided

### Performance Indicators

- Percentage of payroll spent on training and development
- Staff Magazine published
- Results of survey to establish the level of satisfaction with internal customer service
- New information systems in place to disseminate HR information.

## Appendix I – Quality Customer Service Liaison Officers

In order to develop a better customer focus a QCS Liaison Officers Network was established with representatives from all areas of the Department.

Below is a list of the QCS Liaison Officers (February 2005).

Louise Kenny	Harry Harris
Tom Monks	Pat Clifford
Teresa Cody	Fiona Prendergast
Eddie Flood	Sandra Walsh
Michael O'Brien	Maeve O'Brien
Catherine McManus (Chair)	Dave Maguire
Eileen Keogh	Brian Dowling
Paul Howard	Deirdre Dunworth
Margaret McDonnell	Joan Regan
Paul Cantwell	Dave Wolfe

## Appendix II – Consultation with the External Customers

(Survey was carried out in October/November 03)

### Introduction

As part of the consultation process for our Customer Charter and Customer Action Plan the Department carried out a customer survey to evaluate and identify improvements the level of customer service offered to our customers. Those surveyed included the Health Boards, a range of Health Agencies, other Government Departments and the General Public. A survey questionnaire was also placed on our website. A total of 300 surveys were sent out and 109 were returned giving a response rate of 36%.

### Summary of Results

The sections of the survey addressed, in this report are:

- Telephone callers
- Courtesy
- Helpfulness
- Efficiency and Promptness
- Adequacy of Department of Health and Children (DOHC) public offices
- Correspondence
- Overall satisfaction with (DOHC)
- Response rates
- General comments from Health Boards and Agencies
- Any comments/recommendations they may have regarding our Customer Charter and Customer Action Plan

### Q1 - Contacting the Department

How customers make contact with DOHC was broken down into the following:

85% by Phone  
45% by Post  
40% by e-mail  
26% Personal caller  
2% other

### Q2/7 - Telephone Callers

74% of respondents contacted the Department's main number and 36% contacted staff directly. The following results were achieved in response to the question relating to the promptness of the telephone system,  
60% of respondents claim that their queries are dealt with promptly,  
18% neither agreed nor disagreed that their queries were dealt with promptly and  
22% disagreed that their queries were dealt with promptly.

**Q3/4 - Courtesy and Helpfulness**

92% of respondents felt they had been treated in a courteous manner by DOHC staff and 82% found DOHC staff helpful.

**Q5 - Efficiency and Promptness**

62% of respondents agreed that their queries were dealt with efficiently and promptly, 18% neither agreed nor disagreed that their queries were dealt with efficiently and promptly, 21% disagreed that their queries were dealt with efficiently and promptly.

**Q6 - Adequacy of DOHC public offices**

62% of those surveyed felt that facilities at DOHC adequately meet their needs, 18% neither agreed nor disagreed that facilities at DOHC adequately met their needs and 20% disagreed that facilities at DOHC adequately met their needs.

**Q8/10/11 - Correspondence**

61% of respondents felt that their correspondence is answered within a reasonable timeframe, 15% neither agreed nor disagreed that their correspondence was answered within a reasonable timeframe, 24% disagreed that their correspondence was answered within a reasonable timeframe. 57% felt they received prompt replies to their e-mails, 36% neither agreed nor disagreed that they received prompt replies to their e-mails, 8% disagreed that they received promptly replies to their e-mails, 69% felt requests for publications; reference material or other printed information was dealt with efficiently and promptly, 17% neither agreed nor disagreed that their requests for publications etc. were dealt with efficiently and promptly, 14% disagreed that their requests for publications etc. were dealt with efficiently and promptly.

**Q9 - Concise replies**

69% of respondents agreed that replies received from the Department were clear and easy to understand, 17% neither agreed nor disagreed that replies received from the Department were clear and easy to understand, 14% disagreed that replies received from the Department were clear and easy to understand.

**Q12 - Satisfaction**

68% of respondents were satisfied with the level of advice/assistance received from DOHC, 9% neither agreed nor disagreed and 23% disagreed.

### **Q13 - Response Rates**

#### ***Telephone***

68% felt that the telephone should be answered within 4-6 rings.

### **Q14 - Correspondence**

58% of respondents felt that their correspondence should be responded to within less than 7 days.

### **Q15 - e-mail**

90% of respondents felt their e-mails should be responded to within less than 7 days.

### **Q16 - Publications, Reference Material or Other Printed Information**

61% of respondents felt these should be responded to within less than 7 days.

## **Comments from Health Boards and Agencies**

### **Negative Comments**

- Not knowing who to contact in the Department
- Difficulty in accessing information from internet – information often out of date
- Delays in returning calls
- Lack of clarity in policy matters
- Lack of equity in allocation of resources/funding
- Lack of full understanding of work of Health Boards

### **Suggestions for Charter/Action Plan**

- Promptness, courtesy, helpfulness
- Timely and accessible information
- Provision of DOHC contact names and numbers
- Standard service times
- Commitment to providing timely, efficient and consistent service
- Customer focused service with equity and equality for all
- Good communication
- Increased customer participation in decision making
- Informed staff

## Appendix III – Review of Progress of Customer Service Action Plan 2003-2004

### 1. Quality Service Standards

Action Proposed	Action Taken to Date	Status
Customer Service to be identified as a core competency for all DOHC staff participating in PMDS.	The climate survey carried out in Dec. 2003 found that there was a strong customer service ethos in the Department. Other areas did not score as highly and it was decided to concentrate on these areas for PMDS currently.	Action revised
Progress on QCS will be provided in Departmental Annual Reports.	Will be included in next annual report.	Complete
QCS and Induction training courses to include awareness of 12 Principles.	A QCS module has been piloted in induction courses.	Complete
CSAP finalised circulated to all staff and made available on website.	Completed - circulated to all staff early 2003.	Complete

## 2. Equality/Diversity

Action Proposed	Action Taken to Date	Status
GRO Modernisation Civil Registration Programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GRO can now produce the following categories of certificates electronically - Births from 1900; Deaths from 1966 and Marriages from 1920.</li> </ul>	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electronic production of certificates is available in all health board regions.</li> </ul>	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lunchtime opening at GRO, Joyce House commenced on 24 November 2003.</li> </ul>	Complete
Include Equality/Diversity awareness in modules of relevant training courses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A module on equality and diversity and anti bullying is now included in each Induction course and presented by a representative from Personnel.</li> </ul>	Complete
Continue to promote the availability of family friendly schemes for all staff.	<p>DOHC currently offer nine different options of worksharing with 18.65% of staff currently involved in one of these options (of the 18.65% - 17.50% are female and 1.15% are male).</p> <p>Other family-friendly schemes provided by the Department include term-time, force majeure, parental leave, maternity leave, adoptive leave, paternity leave and unpaid leave for domestic reasons.</p>	Complete

Areas for priority action as per Equality & Diversity Policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A module on equality and diversity and anti bullying is now included in each Induction course and presented by a representative from Personnel.</li> </ul>	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Records on participation rates in competitions are being collected, equality and diversity issues are included in interview skills training and staff development training courses.</li> </ul>	Ongoing

### 3. Physical Access

Action Proposed	Action Taken to Date	Status
Ensure physical access to all our public offices especially for those with special needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical access at Head Office and at Joyce House meets acceptable standards.</li> </ul>	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fibre optic lighting in place in foyer to assist visually impaired.</li> </ul>	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hearing loops in place.</li> </ul>	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modern wheelchair lift in place at Joyce House.</li> </ul>	Complete
Physical access has to be a priority when sourcing new headquarters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical access will be a priority in the selection of new headquarters (contingent to Department's plans for restructuring).</li> </ul>	Ongoing

Interim measures should be put in place to improve Hawkins House prior to moving.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refurbishment is ongoing.</li> <li>• Foyer of head office redecorated in mid 2003.</li> <li>• Faults in fibre optic lighting system rectified.</li> </ul>	Ongoing Complete Complete
Review health and safety policy and procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff member to address Health and Safety in 2004.</li> </ul>	Ongoing

#### 4. Information

Action Proposed	Action Taken to Date	Status
Ensure website is kept current and up-to-date.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Press releases and health information are kept up-to-date.</li> <li>• On-line survey was carried out in October/ November 2003 to assess the effectiveness of the website and identify areas for improvement. (updated site to be launched in 2004).</li> </ul>	Ongoing  Ongoing
Ensure HealthNET (intranet) is kept current.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need to redevelop HealthNET was recognised as a priority towards the end of 2003.</li> <li>• Various options are under active consideration.</li> </ul>	Ongoing  Ongoing
Ensure that new departmental information on OASIS is kept up-to-date.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department worked actively with OASIS to ensure health information is current.</li> </ul>	Complete
Ensure relevant publications are available in Irish, Braille, large print etc. if requested.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Braille version of Customer Action Plan and 12 QCS Principles are available.</li> <li>• Range of publications/ pamphlets in Irish has been expanded.</li> </ul>	Complete  Complete

Continue to display current reports/health promotion literature in Hawkins House main foyer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Displays are regularly updated.</li> <li>• The Health Promotion Unit is advised of items frequently requested at the Customer Service Desk.</li> </ul>	Complete  Complete
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## 5. Timeliness and Courtesy

Action Proposed	Action Taken to Date	Status
Deal promptly with requests for publications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidelines for response times will be agreed and set out in Customer Charter.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
Produce Protocol regarding service delivery times, voicemail, e-mail etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal Customer Protocol and development of Charter has commenced.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
Monitor and review existing service delivery standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being carried out as part of consultation process for Customer Charter/ Action Plan (300 + questionnaires issued).</li> <li>• Completed questionnaires analysed which helped inform new delivery standards.</li> <li>• Guidelines for monitoring delivery standards will be set out in Charter and new Customer Action Plan.</li> </ul>	Complete  Complete  Complete

## 6. Complaints

Action Proposed	Action Taken to Date	Status
Create quality of service feedback form on the website. Evaluate feedback and publicise.	• An on-line survey was run in October 2003.	Complete
	• Results under analysis. These will feed into new website.	Complete
	• Comment/Suggestion cards introduced early 2003.	Complete
Devise formal Complaints Procedures about service provided.	Completed and published.	Complete

## 7. Appeals

Action Proposed	Action Taken to Date	Status
Devise formal appeals procedures about service provided.	Completed and published in October 2003.	Complete
Inform customers of their right to appeal decisions on service delivery complaints.	Part of Complaints and Appeals procedure (October 2003).	Complete

## 8. Consultation and Evaluation

Action Proposed	Action Taken to Date	Status
Conduct annual external customer surveys.	Survey carried out as part of consultation process for Customer Charter/Action Plan.	Complete
Ongoing consultation with QCS Subcommittee of internal Partnership Committee.	Regular meetings are held.	Complete
Run Ringmaster reports on response rates etc. regularly Ringmaster allows evaluation of the calls received and dealt with at the switch.	Telephone system is currently under review in order to develop the best option for call monitoring.	Ongoing
	New monitoring procedures will be set out in Customer Action Plan 2005-2007.	Ongoing

## 9. Choice

Action Proposed	Action Taken to Date	Status
Continue with GRO Modernisation Programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GRO can now produce certs electronically - Births from 1900, Deaths from 1966 and Marriages from 1920.</li> </ul>	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Electronic production of certificates is in operation in all health board regions.</li> </ul>	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online registration of births and deaths commenced in September 2003 and is available in all health board regions.</li> </ul>	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lunchtime opening at GRO, Joyce House commenced on 24 November 2003.</li> </ul>	Complete
Encourage use of voicemail.	Set out in Internal Customer Protocol due for publication in early 2004.	Complete
Ensure sections are manned during relevant times.	Set out in Internal Customer Protocol due for publication in early 2004.	Complete
Ensure relevant publications are available on website.	Most publications are posted on website, <a href="http://www.dohc.ie">www.dohc.ie</a>	Complete

## 10. Official Language

Action Proposed	Action Taken to Date	Status
Prepare for compliance with Official Languages Act, 2003.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Irish speakers in DOHC have been identified to assist with customers.</li> </ul>	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact maintained with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs re implementation of the Official Languages Act, 2003.</li> </ul>	Complete

## 11. Better Co-ordination

Action Proposed	Action Taken to Date	Status
Continue with the Civil Registration Modernisation Programme in conjunction with Dept. of Social & Family Affairs.	In progress. Since the commencement of online registration of births, child benefit applications are sent from Department of Social Welfare and Family Affairs automatically (data is transferred electronically via REACH).	Complete
	Customers will soon be able to avail of internet services to apply for birth, death and marriage certificates.	Ongoing
Participation in ongoing eGovernment strategy.	The GRO is involved in sharing live event – birth, death and marriage information with records being shared with other Departments/Agencies.	Ongoing
Ongoing commitment to implementation of Civil Service modernisation programme.	The Department has prepared an Action Plan for modernisation under <i>Sustaining Progress</i> . This is subject to regular extensive validation by CSPVG.	Ongoing

## 12. Internal Customer

Action Proposed	Action Taken to Date	Status
Include internal customer module on all customer service training/induction courses.	GRO (Dublin) to develop their own customer service training.	Ongoing
	GRO (Roscommon) to receive customised training when it opens.	Ongoing
Launch Staff Suggestion Scheme on service delivery.	Suggestion scheme in place - comment boxes used.	Complete
Protocol developed for all staff regarding dealings with internal customers.	Protocol developed in consultation with the Partnership QCS Subcommittee, Departmental Council, and QCS Liaison Officers – to be launched in 2004.	Ongoing
Recommendations of Climate Survey acted upon.	In progress - Information received from survey will be used in Customer Charter and the new Customer Action Plan.	Ongoing

## Appendix IV – Department of Health and Children Customer Charter

### Our Offices: Contacting Us

#### Department of Health and Children

Hawkins House, Hawkins Street, Dublin 2

Website: [www.dohc.ie](http://www.dohc.ie)

E-mail: [info@health.gov.ie](mailto:info@health.gov.ie)

Tel: (01) 635 4000

Customer Service Desk (01) 635 3000

Fax: (01) 635 4001

LoCall: 1890 200 311

#### General Register Office

Government Offices

Convent Road

Roscommon

Website: [www.groireland.ie](http://www.groireland.ie)

E-mail: [gro@health.gov.ie](mailto:gro@health.gov.ie)

Tel: (090) 663 2900

LoCall 1890 252 076

Fax: (090) 663 2999

*When contacting us, please inform us if you have any special requirements and we will do our best to accommodate you.*

### Our Services

The Department's statutory role is to support the Minister in the formulation and evaluation of policies for the health services. Delivering a quality service is one of our main objectives.

### Our Commitment to You

We will provide you with a high quality customer service in an efficient and courteous manner. We are committed to the twelve principles of Quality Customer Service as approved by Government.

### Timeliness

We will provide timely and accurate information through our website ([www.dohc.ie](http://www.dohc.ie)), our Customer Service Desk and through individual areas.

- We will seek to respond to letters within 15 working days of receipt.
- We will keep you informed of progress should any delay arise.
- We will answer telephone calls within 20 seconds in a courteous manner.

If we can't provide you with the information or the service that you require we will endeavour to direct you to the appropriate agency.

### **Equality and Diversity**

We will deal with you in a fair and open manner in the spirit of the Equal Status Act, 2000. We will endeavour to address the needs of particular customer groups when formulating policy.

### **Co-ordination**

We will work with other Government Departments and Agencies to co-ordinate our services to you.

### **Languages**

Signage at our public offices will be available in both Irish and English. You may deal with us through Irish if you wish. We will try to provide a service through sign language and other languages where possible.

### **Complaints and Appeals**

If you are unhappy with any aspect of our service please inform us and we will try to rectify the problem. We have a formal complaint and appeals procedure (details available from our Customer Service Desk or on our website, [www.dohc.ie](http://www.dohc.ie)). You may also refer complaints to the Ombudsman if you wish.

### **Feedback: Help Us to Help You**

We welcome your views. Comment cards are available from our public offices and on our website. You can also write to the Customer Service Officer with any suggestions or send an e-mail to [info@health.gov.ie](mailto:info@health.gov.ie)

### **Consultation and Evaluation**

We will:

- Monitor and evaluate our performance against our Customer Charter and Action Plan and report our findings in our Annual Progress Report
- Examine the development and delivery of our services in order to better meet your needs
- Review feedback and implement changes where appropriate.

## Appendix V – Internal Customer Protocol

### Setting the Standards for dealings with colleagues

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

(Internal Customer Principle, Quality Customer Service, Principles July 2000).

Internal customer service is about the duty of care we owe to our colleagues. This protocol has been developed by the Quality Customer Service (QCS) Sub-committee of Partnership in consultation with Departmental Council and the Department’s QCS Liaison Officers. The purpose of the protocol is to set high standards for all dealings with our colleagues and thus with all our customers.

#### At all times

- Remember Departmental colleagues are your customers also
- Be courteous, helpful and responsible to people working in the Department
- Honour commitments given to Departmental colleagues
- Keep Departmental colleagues appraised of progress in relation to their enquiries
- Inform, support and consult with colleagues
- Maintain adequate office cover during business hours

#### Telephone

Ensure your contact details are correct on the internal phone list and amend as necessary.

#### As the caller

- Always identify yourself and your section
- Explain/Introduce the call you are making/forwarding
- If you are forwarding a call to another section, advise both the caller and the recipient

#### As the recipient

- Identify yourself when answering all calls – give your name and section
- Be courteous, helpful and responsible
- Be aware of your colleague’s need for a timely and full response
- Let your colleague know if you cannot give a response within the agreed timescale
- Return calls as soon as possible
- If a query is not within your area of responsibility advise the caller and direct them to the appropriate person

- Make appropriate arrangements for handling telephone calls in your absence by forwarding your phone to a colleague's extension or using voicemail
- Use voicemail effectively. Temporary greetings, when used properly, enhance the use of voicemail. Record your own personal greetings and include contact details of co-workers

### **E-mail**

- Deal with e-mail messages from your colleagues promptly
- If it is necessary to forward an e-mail to another section for action - please inform the sender
- Activate your "out of office" facility on the e-mail system prior to planned leave/ absences
- Include your telephone number with every e-mail

### **Meetings**

- When arranging a meeting, ascertain if colleagues attending the meeting have special requirements
- Work colleagues attending the meeting should inform the organiser of any special requirements in advance
- Provide colleagues with as much notice as possible of upcoming meetings
- Provide documents for meetings as far in advance as possible
- Prepare properly to participate in the meetings you attend
- If you cannot attend the meeting inform the secretary in advance and nominate a replacement if that is appropriate
- Be punctual
- Meetings should work to an agenda
- Keep meetings as short as possible
- The meeting should address all topics on the agenda fully while finishing within a reasonable time

### **Correspondence**

- Attach a cover note when sending letters/notes/faxes between sections
- If it is appropriate to refer to another section for action don't forget to inform the sender
- Keep colleagues apprised of progress
- Interim replies should issue if necessary
- Colleagues should get a timely and full response to all their correspondence

- Formal letters from colleagues require formal acknowledgements
- In your absence make arrangements for your correspondence to be dealt with by a colleague
- Set realistic deadlines when requesting responses from colleagues
- If you are unable to meet a requested deadline, inform the sender as soon as possible

### **QCS Liaison Officers**

Quality Customer Service Liaison Officers have been appointed to assist in the implementation of this protocol. If you experience difficulties with internal customer service, please contact the QCS Liaison Officer for the relevant area. The Customer Service Desk holds a current list of QCS Liaison Officers and it is also available on HealthNET.

## Appendix VI – DOHC Customer Complaints and Appeals Procedure

### Department of Health and Children

#### Customer Complaints and Appeals Procedure

##### Our Commitment to Quality Customer Service

The Department of Health and Children is committed to providing all its customers with a high quality service. The standards of service which you can expect are set out in the *Customer Action Plan* which is available on [www.dohc.ie](http://www.dohc.ie)

While we work hard to provide a high quality service to our customers, we are aware that sometimes you may feel you did not receive as good a service as you expected. As a result, and in keeping with our Action Plan, we have introduced a *Customer Complaints Procedure*.

##### What is covered by our Complaints Procedure?

The Complaints Procedure covers complaints about issues such as delays, mistakes and poor customer services which the Department provides – i.e. instances where you did not receive the quality of service from the Department you feel you are entitled to.

The Complaints Procedure **does not** cover:

- Matters of policy.
- Complaints relating to a hospital/health board or other health agency (in such instances you should contact the agency concerned directly).
- Matters which are the subject of litigation.
- Matters which have been referred to the Ombudsman or Information Commissioner.

##### How to Complain

If you are dissatisfied by some aspect of our service and you feel able to, please express this to the person with whom you are dealing who will try to help. If you prefer, please ask to speak to a manager who will also try to help as we aim to resolve all difficulties at local level where at all possible.

If you remain dissatisfied and wish to make a complaint, you can contact the *Complaints Officer*, who will arrange for your complaint to be formally investigated.

Complaints may be made either orally or in writing to:

Complaints Officer  
Department of Health and Children  
Hawkins House  
FREEPOST  
Dublin 2

Tel: (01) 635 3111  
LoCall 1890 200 311  
E-mail: [complaints@health.irlgov.ie](mailto:complaints@health.irlgov.ie)

For complaints about the General Register Office please contact:

Complaints Officer  
General Register Office  
Oifig an Ard-Chláraitheora  
Government Offices  
Convent Road  
Roscommon

Tel: (090) 663 2900  
LoCall 1890 252 076  
E-mail: [gro-complaints@health.irlgov.ie](mailto:gro-complaints@health.irlgov.ie)

### **Information You Need to Provide**

By providing the following information you can help to speed up the investigation of your complaint:

- Your name, address and, if you don't mind us contacting you by phone, your telephone number;
- Exactly what you are dissatisfied with;
- The name of the official(s) or sections(s) who dealt with you;
- If your complaint is complicated, you may find it best to put it in writing so that no important detail is overlooked. Remember to send us copies of all relevant documentation/correspondence that you may have;
- If you have special needs that may affect your ability to make a complaint, please let us know at the earliest opportunity. We will make every effort to assist you.

### **Our Standards for Dealing with Complaints**

- We will treat your complaint properly, fairly and impartially;
- We promise that making a complaint will have no implications for your dealings with the Department;
- An official other than those originally involved will examine your complaint;

- We will examine and review your complaint and send a reply to you within 20 working days of the receipt of your complaint. Where it is not possible to meet this target, we will inform you and continue to do so until the matter is resolved;
- We will apologise for any mistake, explain what happened and put it right wherever possible;
- We will change the way we do things to avoid making the same mistake in future.

### Can you appeal?

If you are unhappy about the outcome of the review by the Complaints Officer you can appeal the matter to:

Complaint Appeals Officer  
 Department of Health and Children  
 Hawkins House  
 FREEPOST  
 Dublin 2

Tel (01) 635 3110  
 LoCall 1890 200 311  
 E-mail: [complaint-appeals@health.irlgov.ie](mailto:complaint-appeals@health.irlgov.ie)

### The Role of the Ombudsman

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaints procedure you may refer the matter to the Ombudsman.

The Office of the Ombudsman was set up to examine complaints from members of the public who feel that they have been unfairly treated in their dealings with a range of bodies including Government Departments.

Please note that you generally must exhaust all internal complaints and appeals mechanisms before the Office of the Ombudsman will get involved.

The Ombudsman may be contacted at:

Office of the Ombudsman  
 18, Lower Leeson Street  
 Dublin 2

Tel (01) 639 5600  
 Fax (01) 639 5674

LoCall 1890 223 030  
*(For callers outside the Dublin area)*  
 E-mail: [ombudsman@ombudsman.irlgov.ie](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.irlgov.ie)

## Appendix VII – Principal Contact Points

Department of Health and Children  
Hawkins House  
Hawkins Street  
Dublin 2  
Tel:(01) 635 4000  
LoCall 1890 200 311

National Children’s Office  
St Martin’s House  
Waterloo Road  
Dublin 4  
Tel: (01) 242 0000

General Register Office  
Government Offices  
Convent Road  
Roscommon  
Tel: (090) 663 2900  
LoCall: 1890 252 076

Social Services Inspectorate  
Floor 3  
Morrison Chambers  
Nassau Street  
Dublin 2  
Tel: (01) 418 0588

Adoption Board  
Shelbourne House  
Shelbourne Road  
Dublin 4  
Tel: (01) 230 9300

Crisis Pregnancy Agency  
89-94 Capel Street  
Dublin 1  
Tel: (01) 814 6292