



SCOTTISH BORDERS CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY

2026-29

Customers at the heart of everything we do

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

REVIEW

4.9



1,680

SATISFACTION SCORE



SATISFACTION SCORE



1,580 100

COMMENT

Good service...

Send



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FOREWORD

Scottish Borders Council is committed to putting our customers at the heart of everything we do. As the needs of our communities evolve, so too must the way we deliver our services. This Customer Experience Strategy sets out our ambition to provide consistently high-quality, accessible, and responsive services for all residents, businesses, communities, and visitors.

We recognise that customers engage with the Council in many ways, and at times of great change — including financial pressures, increasing expectations, and rapid digital development — it is more important than ever that our services are designed around the people who use them. This strategy builds on the Scottish Borders Council Plan and our Target Operating Model, ensuring that our vision and priorities translate into real, meaningful improvements in customer experience.

Over the next three years, we will focus on delivering services that are simple to access, efficient to use, and available in ways that meet the diverse needs of our communities. We will embrace digital opportunities while ensuring that no one is left behind, continuing to provide high-quality face-to-face support for those who need it. We will use data, insight, and customer feedback to improve how we work, strengthen consistency across services, and make better decisions.

Our commitment is to deliver value for money while ensuring that every customer interaction — whether online, by phone, or in person — reflects our values of inclusivity, collaboration, responsibility, and ambition. This strategy outlines the action we will take to ensure our services are fit for the future and aligned with the wider strategic direction of the Council.

Together, by focusing on the needs of our customers, we can build a more responsive, modern, and sustainable Council for the Scottish Borders.

Councillor Caroline Cochrane



1. OUR COMMITMENT TO CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

We are committed to delivering an excellent, consistent customer experience by placing our customers at the centre of what we do. It is important to us, to provide a positive customer experience to all our customers, whenever and however they interact or access our services. In the Scottish Borders Council Plan and Target Operating Model, we aspire to deliver high quality, value for money services in an effective and timely manner.

We will do our part by:

- responding promptly to your requests, first time whenever possible, and keeping you informed about what happens next and when
- providing multiple ways to access our services that suit how you prefer to contact us
- making online interactions quicker and easier
- protecting your information and respecting your privacy
- seeking satisfactory solutions with a positive, can-do attitude within our resources
- using clear language and avoiding jargon
- responding within our stated timescales

To support us, we ask you to:

- use the available contact methods published by us
- acknowledge that your request may be shared with other Council staff or services to resolve it
- understand we may not be able to meet every need
- be aware of our financial constraints
- provide us with accurate information and respond to questions promptly
- ask for explanations if needed
- keep appointments and inform us if you cannot attend

We will show respect by:

- treating you politely, fairly, and respectfully, with diversity and well-being always considered
- being helpful and transparent
- listening to your needs
- explaining decisions clearly
- respecting your privacy and confidentiality
- providing accessible, understandable information

To assist us in maintaining respect, we ask you to:

- treat our staff politely and respectfully
- recognise that abuse is not tolerated:
- the safety and well-being of staff are priorities, and they have the right to do their jobs without abuse
- we understand disagreements and vulnerability, but we have a duty to protect staff and others present

We aim to improve continuously by:

- encouraging your feedback via our website, phone lines, response forms, or staff
- designing services around customer needs
- Investing in digital improvements in line with expectations
- publishing our performance to show progress
- handling complaints professionally and learning from any shortcomings

To help us improve, we ask you to:

- share ideas for service improvements
- report if we fall short of standards using our complaints form
- tell us about outstanding service via Customer Feedback



2. OUR CUSTOMERS

Our customer experience describes what people can expect when they interact with the Council – whether they contact us online, by phone, face to face, or through a partner organisation.

We are committed to providing services that are **accessible, fair, responsive and respectful**, recognising the diverse needs of our communities and the different ways people choose to engage with us.

Our approach is **customer focused, public value driven**, and shaped by feedback from residents, businesses and communities

The Scottish Borders area has a population of **116,980** as of the mid-2024 estimate.

4th Most sparsely populated **mainland** area in Scotland

The age distribution suggests an aging population in the Scottish Borders, with a higher proportion of older adults and fewer people in the younger and working-age groups compared to the national average.

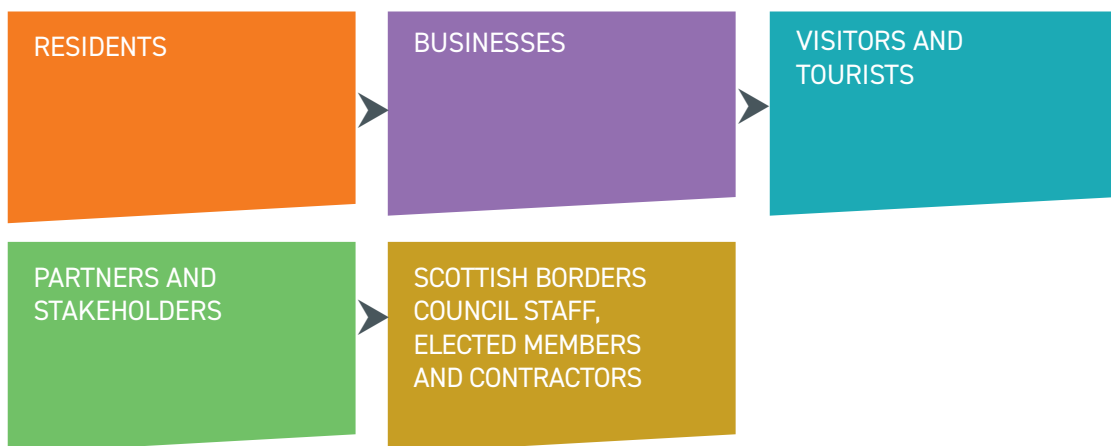
Households

In the Scottish Borders, there are **56,018** occupied dwellings as of 2023 (National Records of Scotland). Scottish Borders is characterised by its rural and small-town settings.

Our customers include anyone who lives, works, or visits the Scottish Borders area and interacts with the Council.



Our customers fall into five primary categories:





We are in a time of great change. Scottish Borders Council as other public sectors and in particular Local Government faces ever reducing budgets for public services, coupled with a change in individual's and communities' needs and expectations. As a result, this is the perfect time for the council to ensure that we commit to deliver high quality, value for money services from our customers' perspective.

The Council is committed to understanding our current and future customers' needs and expectations to ensure services are designed in the best way to deliver what is needed. To create this strategy, we have drawn on best practice from the public and private sector.

This Customer Experience Strategy describes what we want to achieve over the next 3 years and the action we will be taking to make sure our approach is fit for the future. Our vision for customers is shaped by the Scottish Borders Council Plan and supporting strategies.

The Customer Experience is a foundational strategy that will support the delivery of the Council's vision and priorities, as detailed in the Council Plan and Council Plan Delivery Framework. Having a plan for how we work with, and for, our customers are crucial for all council services; a clear customer experience strategy is essential to support the creation and delivery of a suite of Scottish Borders Council foundational strategies.

Customers are at the heart of everything we do.

We aim to provide efficient, responsive, and accessible services, with customer satisfaction at the core.

Council Plan Delivery Framework

- Communities and customers are at the heart of everything we do and it is essential that they can access efficient services.
- Our customers should be satisfied with their experience of the Council.

How we will organise our services to make them simpler and quicker

- Services will be user-friendly, caring, quicker responses, clear Information and accessible through multiple channels.
- Wherever possible, services will be available and delivered digitally, reducing demand for phone and in-person interaction so those resources can be focused on those most in need.
- Services are outcome-focused and maximise the use of technology to drive efficiency and effectiveness.
- Continue to provide valued face to face interactions for those who cannot use the technology, how this is delivered will need to be flexible to community needs.

3. OUR VISION

3.1 Where We Are Now

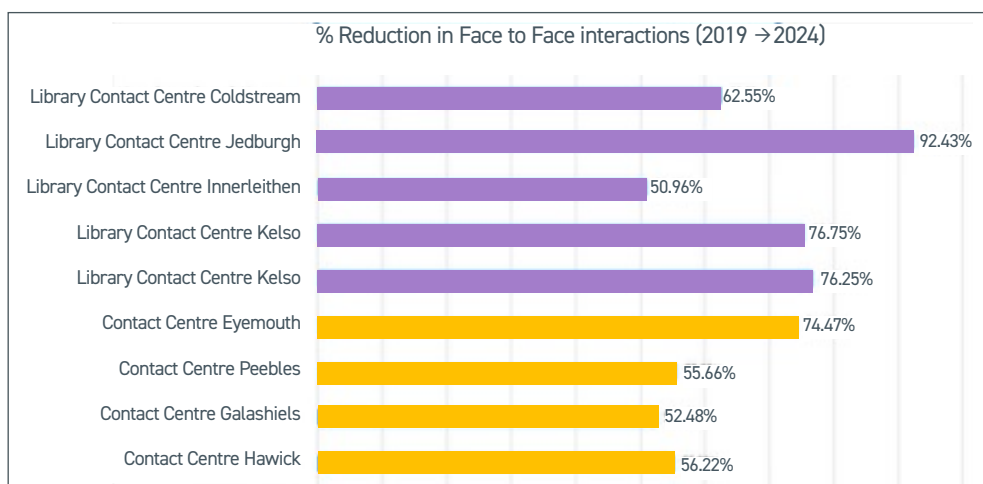
Scottish Borders Council has evolved its customer contact approach, driven by global events and changing customer expectations.

Key developments include:

- Increased digital service adoption and providing more opportunities for customers.
- Our monitoring of customer interactions tells us that of 60% is now via 24/7 digital self-service.
- Between 2023/24 & 2025/26 the number of telephone calls are down by 26.25% and this is a continuation of the reduction trend in calls as customers choose the digital offering.



- Significant reduction in face-to-face visits and telephone calls, with webchat and online channels growing rapidly. Average reduction in footfall of 66% over current locations. The levels are such that face to face interactions account for only 3% of our interactions.



- Continue to provide in-person support to customers to ensure that we are providing support to all customers.

We recognise the need for customers to experience the same high standard of service no matter which team they contact. Simplify customer journeys, ensuring consistency and accessibility across all services.

3.2 What We Want To Achieve

Our approach must evolve to deliver improved customer experiences and support customers to achieve their outcomes.

We will:

- Design services around customer needs, making them easy to use and accessible.
- Use data and feedback to drive continuous improvement.
- Ensure inclusive and reliable access for all, regardless of digital confidence or device.

Our values:

- **Inclusive:** We will make sure everyone can access our services, whatever their circumstances
- **Collaborative:** Working across the Council and with partners.
- **Outcome-focused:** We will listen to customers and communities.
- **Responsible:** Ensuring that all staff are taking responsibility for customer experience.
- **Needs-led:** Designing services around customer needs.
- **Ecologically aware:** Using digital channels to support sustainability.
- **Ambitious:** Delivering the best experience for all Borders customers.

3.3 Design Principles

We will:

- Minimise steps for customers to access what they need.
- Make information simple and easy to understand.
- Resolve queries at first contact wherever possible.
- Utilise self-service and optimise technology.
- Take a consistent approach across channels and services.
- Work proactively and honestly with customers.
- Measure, track, and continuously improve customer service performance.

3.4 How We Will Get There

3.4.1 Strategic Outcomes

3.4.2 Outcome 1: Better customer experience

- Develop and implement service standards and communicate these to customers. We will clearly tell you how long things should take, so you know what to expect.
- Implement a multi-channel plan (website, face-to-face, telephone, webchat).
- Develop a digital interaction telephone offering for customers to enable them to access generated information 24/7.
- Ensuring that our website is accessible and provides easy access to information, to enable customers to self-serve and digital agents to be able to respond to general information requests.
- Invest in high-quality face-to-face customer service, supporting digital confidence so no one is excluded.
- Ensure information is easy to find, understand, and access.
- Explore future requirements for customer relationship management and account functions.
- Use user-centred service design, involving customers in shaping services.
- Gather and use customer data and feedback to inform service design.
- View complaints positively as it leads to improvements.

3.4.3 Outcome 2: Customer-centric culture and efficient ways of working

- Encourage and develop a customer-focused culture through staff training, best practice sharing and promoting effective digital solutions.
- Support councillors and staff to empower customers and overcome barriers to access.
- Ensure an effective customer service for digital and telephone enquiries, with complex cases triaged as needed.
- Apply design principles and guidelines for consistency.
- Maximise new technologies for self-service and efficient access.
- Gather customer feedback to ensure we are evaluating how we are performing.

3.4.4 Outcome 3: Effective, efficient, and value-for-money customer service

- Harmonise and standardise processes and procedures.
- Put in place policies and principles for customer experience and contact.
- Gather, store, and use customer data and insight to inform service delivery
- Ensure all departments provide a positive customer experience so that this principle is consistently delivered across all service areas.
- Collaborate with partners to consolidate resources and enhance accessibility.
- Localise services to reflect community needs, engaging with communities and partners.

Key to delivering the strategic outcomes are our people, technology, processes, governance and approach to data. Providing information annually to report our performance so that we can demonstrate what is working well and highlight areas for improvement.

People – having the right people doing the right jobs supported in the right way is critical.

Technology – to achieve a digital first, multi-channel approach and the model of customer contact we want to adopt will rely heavily on the use of technology.

Processes – to provide a seamless and consistent 'one council' customer experience we need harmonised and standardised processes and procedures.

Governance – to achieve the consistency we are seeking we will need to put in place policies and principles in relation to customer experience and how customers contact and interact with us.

Data and intelligence – we need an agreed approach to gather, store and make best use of customer data, intelligence and insight. This will include collecting consent from customers to allow us to engage with them in the most effective and inclusive way possible.

4. WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

We will measure and evaluate our success through:

- Better understanding of, and increased customer satisfaction. Using Customer feedback to inform redesign efforts.
- incorporating customer requests and feedback into service processes, including how updates are communicated
- Increased proportion of contact delivered through digital channels.
- Reduction in face-to-face and telephone contact as digital becomes the preferred choice, but not the only channel.
- improving the telephone system and reduction in avoidable contacts.
- Embedded customer-focused culture and empowered staff and councillors.
- redesigning the Council's website
- Reduction in costs associated with non-digital contacts, contributing to financial sustainability.
- Increased resolution at first point of contact and more time for specialist staff to handle complex issues.
- Further development of key data sets and customer activity to ensure we are continuing to monitor and view changes in customer behaviour on the back



5. TRANSLATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

If you require this document in another format (e.g. Audio CD, Large Print, Braille, or another language), please contact us at:

Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose TD6 0SA

Telephone: 0300 100 1800

Or via our website: www.scotborders.gov.uk

Together, we will put customers at the heart of everything we do, making the Scottish Borders a better place for all.





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