# eThekwini Municipality Customer Care Policy

## CUSTOMER CARE POLICY AND STANDARDS

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CUSTOMER FIRST

Customer Care Policy & Standards

Preamble

The eThekwini Municipality’s Vision is that:

By 2020, the eThekwini Municipality will enjoy the reputation of being Africa’s most caring and livable city.

In order to achieve this Vision of being the most caring and livable city a Customer Care Policy has been adopted to develop structures to ensure that in our dealing with customers we demonstrate these values. This policy is based upon the National Batho Pele principles which has been translated as “People First” and emphasizes the values of “Customer First”.

1. Our Aim

It is eThekwini Municipality’s aim that whenever customers have contact with the eThekwini Municipality they will consistently experience standards of service excellence. Our Municipality is committed to ensuring that the human rights principles set out in our National Constitution, the eight Batho Pele (People First) principles that aim to transform public service delivery as well as “getting it right the first time” are experienced whenever customers access our municipal services.

In this way we want to display our commitment to the principle of Customer First and ensure that service excellence is an integral part of the planning and delivery of all Municipal services to its people.

2. What are our Values?

In order to achieve Customer Service Excellence it is necessary that our front line staff have a common set of values that will guide their interaction with customers.

As an organization, eThekwini Municipality will remind our staff that there must be commitment to the following Values that will guide our interactions with customers:

- Respect (we Value our relationship with Customers)
- Good Customer Care
- Service Excellence
- Integrity & Professionalism
- Mutual trust & understanding

These Values will be the cornerstone of our customer focused approach.
3. **What are the Batho Pele principles?**

The name Batho Pele means “People First” and the eight principles set out in it are the foundation of our Government’s approach to guide all interaction between Government institutions and the public.

- **Consultation**
  
  Citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of the public services they receive and, wherever possible, should be given a choice about the services that are offered.

- **Service Standards**
  
  Citizens should be told what level and quality of public services they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect.

- **Access**
  
  All citizens should have equitable access to the services to which they are entitled.

- **Courtesy**
  
  Citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration.

- **Information**
  
  Citizens should be given full, accurate information about the public services they are entitled to receive.

- **Openness and Transparency**
  
  Citizens should be told how the Clusters and Service Units of the Municipality are run, how much they cost, and who is in charge.

- **Redress**
  
  If the promised standard of service is not delivered citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy; and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response.

- **Value for Money**
  
  Public services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value for money.

4. **Who are our Customers?**

In the past eThekwini Municipality referred to the people we deal with as Ratepayers or Consumers. This created an unequal balance as they were seen either as taxpayers or as people who consumed the essential services that we, as a municipality, provided. Our aim is to change this mindset and remind ourselves at all times that we are dealing with Customers.
In other words our Customers are all the people we deal with during our work. They are people who live in, work in or visit our Municipality and who do business with us. In this sense we have both external and internal customers. The same standards must apply to our internal customers (colleagues) as to our external customers.

5. **What is Customer Care and why is it important?**

It is eThekwini Municipality’s aim that every time you contact us as a customer, you will be able to do so conveniently and that you will be treated courteously, promptly and fairly. We will aim to ensure that you will receive a clear response to any service request or enquiry within a stated period of time as defined in the Customer Service Charter and that what we do will be right first time.

Whilst Customer Service has been defined as a set of behaviours that a business undertakes in its interaction with its customers, Customer Care is the phrase that is used to describe the taking care of our customers in a positive manner. We see Good Customer Care as:

- Treating people with courtesy, dignity and respect.
- Treating people how they would like to be treated.
- Treating people in their language of preference in accordance with the eThekwini Municipality’s Language Policy.
- Providing a good quality service in a friendly, efficient and helpful manner.
- Giving people the information they need and providing an explanation if the service is not available.
- Keeping the customer informed of progress in addressing their complaints/requests or enquiries.

Customer Care standards are important to ensure:

- That all customers, whether they are residents or visitors to our Municipality will receive the same consistent high standards of customer care.
- That customer care and customer service are essential to the planning and delivery of all Council services.
- That our staff will always be reminded of their responsibility to put the Customer First and what this means in practical terms.
- That the Council will eliminate wastage by providing services “Right the First time”.

In order to achieve this it is important to clearly set goals as to how we can put Customers First. It is important to define what Service Excellence in Customer Care is
so that our staff will know what standards they must maintain. In addition, we inform customers what standards of customer care they can expect whenever they engage with any staff of the eThekwini Municipality. This Customer First principle will be adhered to whenever any policies and procedures are being considered.

6. What is the Sizakala Programme?

The Sizakala Customer Care Programme is the practical application of the Batho Pele principles in dealing with our customers and the programme through which the Municipality is seeking to deliver professional customer service to its people in a practical and visible manner. It is a basket that contains all the elements of the Customer Services projects that are being implemented.

In isiZulu the word “Sizakala” means “Get Help”. This is exactly what all our environments that deal with customers must be.

The eThekwini Municipality is committed to upholding the principles of developmental local government and providing equitable access to government services to all its people. These principles are at the heart of the Municipality's Integrated Development Plan.

The eThekwini Municipality has therefore developed the Sizakala Customer Care programme to give meaning to these principles. It shows the Municipality’s commitment to ensuring service delivery and a better quality of life for all its citizens. In addition, the projects assist in testing the effectiveness and efficiency in its implementation.

7. How will we measure our success?

The eThekwini Municipality will back up our Customer Care Policy by specific Customer Service Charters and Customer Care Standards for each service delivery Unit which will be our promise of delivery to Customers. We will ask our Customer Care Staff to sign a Pledge in which they commit themselves to upholding these standards.

We will monitor our performance through continuous monitoring, through benchmarking ourselves against other similar organizations and being subject to regular Performance Audits.

We will develop methods of receiving customer feedback to find out whether customers are satisfied with the standard of service they have received. These will be through:

- Requesting customers to complete a Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire and post transaction telephone follow-up of a sample of returns to continuously evaluate customer perceptions of our service.
- Making use of the Mystery Shopper programme where all Centres will be evaluated and scored on an objective basis.
- Organizing annual Focus Group Sessions to measure and understand the perception gap between what customer’s perceptions of our service delivery are and what we think we are achieving.
- Actively advertising in all our Customer Care Centres a toll-free Customer Care Help Line where customers can report poor service.
These monitoring methods will assist us to develop programmes to address any shortcomings in the standard of our service.

Comments, compliments and complaints from our customers are an important part of the process that will help us to build a Customer First organization.

8. **Our Customer Care Standards**

eThekwini Municipality is committed to the continuous improvement of the standards of service it gives to its customers. We will endeavour to provide services and manage complaints in a timeous, efficient and effective manner.

In developing our Customer Care Standards we have tried to:

- Set standards which put the Customer First, are friendly, customer focused and measurable.
- Set clear statements as to how the staff should behave in dealing with customers.
- Set performance targets which can be reviewed.
- Ensure that staff are trained to achieve these standards and that they fully understand the standards that are expected of them.

We are committed to equal opportunities and will provide:

- Support, interpretation and translation services
- Clear signage to direct our Customers to where they want to go
- Buildings which are accessible and welcoming
- Disabled access wherever practicable
- Private areas for customers to discuss personal or sensitive matters
- Training for our staff to build awareness and understanding

Our customers can expect our Staff to:

- Treat you with courtesy, respect and consideration at all times
- Identify themselves by name and when we communicate with you, will listen and respond appropriately
- Conduct our communications with you with efficiency, integrity, fairness and professionalism
- Provide you with relevant, accurate and up-to-date information
• Actively seek comments on a regular basis in order that we continue to develop and improve our service

If a problem arises we will commit to:

• Deal with the problem promptly
• Advise you if there will be a delay in providing a solution to the problem
• Advise you of progress with long-term problems
• Advise where and who to contact in the event of dissatisfaction

Our standards and the way in which we will manage them will be set out in the following documents:

• A Corporate Customer Care Policy for the eThekwini Municipality
• Customer Care Citizen’s Charters and Service Standards for every Service Unit of the eThekwini Municipality that will define the standard of service that customers can expect from these Units and response times.
• A Customer Commitment Drivers document that will define the behaviour that customers can expect to receive from our front line staff when dealing with them.
• A Customer Service Pledge that each of our front line staff will be expected to sign.

9. Customer Care Standards & Management Controls

At the centre of the eThekwini Municipality Customer Care Policy is the principle of placing the Customer First in every task and process. This will have practical challenges for the Municipality as an organization and will require us to reevaluate our processes to ensure that we achieve our standard.

Behind every standard of customer care that we set we will put in place controls to measure our performance in meeting that goal.

Compliance with or Adherence to the Customer Care Service Standards must be reflected as a Key Performance Indicator on each responsible official’s performance plan.

We will build training programmes to capacitate our staff to realize the importance of customer care.

We will continuously review our processes to ensure that they do put the Customer First.

We will ensure that we achieve uniform standards of customer care across the Municipality by adopting common standards of customer service.

We will recognize Service Excellence in customer care through recognizing our staff that perform highly.
We will be sensitive to the feedback we receive from customers and use this to improve the levels of our service.

10. Our Customer Care Commitment

The eThekwini Municipality Customer Care Policy demonstrates our commitment to you and our aim to deliver quality services.

Your comments and observations are always welcome and we strongly encourage you to tell us what we need to do to improve our service. If you, for any reason, think that we have not kept our promise, we want to know about it. Advise our staff at any Customer Care point what the problem is.

If you have experienced poor customer service at any of our Customer Care Centres or in any dealing with a Municipal official, we encourage you to report it to our Customer Care Toll Free Help Line. By reporting poor customer service you will help us to improve our standards.

If the situation has not been resolved, please contact us:

Customer Care Help Line 0800 331 011

eMail Sizakala@durban.gov.za