



COISTE GAIRMOIDEACHAIS CHONTAE CHORCAÍ

**COUNTY CORK VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
(CCVEC)**

**CUSTOMER
SERVICE
POLICY**

**EDUCATION THROUGH PARTNERSHIP
'OIDEACHAS TRÍ PHÁIRTÍOCHT'**

CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

County Cork VEC in supporting and adopting the terms and conditions set down in Sustaining Progress has prepared and adopted this Policy Document on Customer Service.

The Committee, in partnership with its employees, is committed to improving, maintaining and reviewing the level and standard of its customer service to the public.

CCVEC accepts in fulfilling its role, as a Public Service Statutory Body, that it is required to deliver a customer service that demonstrates its commitment to achieving high quality performance outcomes.

The general organisation and administrative functioning of CCVEC has been reviewed and significant re-structuring has commenced in a number of key areas of work involving a direct contact with members of the public.

Re-structuring has been in accordance with the proposals set down under the Rochford Implementation and through the constitution of four distinct 'Pillars' namely:-

Finance
Human Resources
Education Support Services
Information Technology

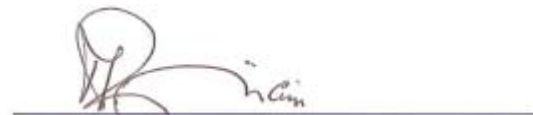
Responsibility has been vested, in accordance with the devolution requirement under the Vocational Education (Amendment) Act, 2001, by the CEO, to the Principal Officer as Head of Organisation Services, and to Assistant Principal Officers supervising each of the four Pillars.

CCVEC has invested significantly in up-dating and enhancing its complete range of services to its customers.

This Policy Document sets down CCVEC's commitment and has the support of the Local Partnership Forum as well as all of the key interests i.e. Administrative Staff, School/College Principals, Co-ordinators and Supervisors of Education Centres, Adult Education and Adult Literacy Officers, Caretakers, etc.



Cathaoirleach
Noel O'Connor, MCC



Príomh Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin
Barra O Briain, Uas.



Coiste Gairmoideachais Chontae Chorcaí
County Cork Vocational Education Committee

**Customer Service
Policy**

2008

Coiste Gairmoideachais Chontae Chorcaí
Teach Yeats
Cearnóg na Beairice
Baile an Chollaigh
Chontae Chorcaí

County Cork VEC Head Office
Yeats House
Barrack Square
Ballincollig
Co Cork

Teileafón/Tel: 021 4665000 Faics/Fax: 021 4665090
Ríomhphost/Email: info@cocorkvec.ie
Gréasán/Web: www.cocorkvec.ie

Coiste Gairmoideachais Chontae Chorcaí
County Cork Vocational Education Committee

Chairperson:

Cllr. Noel O'Connor M.C.C., 'Mulcair', Spa Glen, Mallow, Co Cork

Vice Chairperson:

Rev. Canon George A. Salter, Mount Verdon House, 66 Wellington Road, Cork

Cork County Council Members

Cllr. Aindreas O'Muimhneachain M.C.C., Muirneach Beag, Baile Mhic Íre, Macroom, Co. Cork

Cllr. John O'Shea M.C.C., Droumaloughlin, Bantry, Co. Cork

Cllr. Paula Desmond M.C.C., 26 Carrigmore, Carrigaline, Co. Cork

Cllr. Jim Daly M.C.C., Fernhill Road, Clonakilty, Co. Cork

Cllr. Donal O'Rourke M.C.C., "Ross Cove", Gullane, Clonakilty, Co. Cork

Cllr. Noel Buckley M.C.C., Ballyvouskil, Millstreet, Co. Cork

Cllr. Marie Murphy M.C.C., 6 West End, Millstreet, Co. Cork

Cllr. Tadhg O'Donovan M.C.C., Glen-Fael, Mardyke Road, Skibbereen, Co. Cork

Town Council Members

Cllr. Robert Walsh T.C., White Thorn Park, Tawnies Lower, Clonakilty, Co. Cork

Cllr. Noreen Doyle T.C., "Árd na Gaoithe", 92 Norwood Park, Cobh, Co. Cork

Cllr. Tadhg O'Donovan T.C., 8 Rath Carrig, Pike Road, Fermoy, Co. Cork

Cllr. Mary Evans T.C., Somerfield, Fortview, Ardbrack, Kinsale, Co. Cork

Cllr. Owen McCarthy T.C., 46 Oakwood, Macroom, Co. Cork

Cllr. James Kennedy T.C., St. Joseph's Road, Mallow, Co. Cork

Cllr. Billy Buckley T.C., 11 Youghal Road, Midleton, Co. Cork

Cllr. Catherine O'Keeffe T.C., "Lindisfarne", Baltimore Road, Skibbereen, Co. Cork

Cllr. Oliver Casey T.C., 5 The Mall, Youghal, Co. Cork

Staff Representatives

Ms. Yvonne Bane, 4 Springbrook, Donnybrook, Douglas, Cork

Mr. Gerry Kelly M.C.C., Kileena, Knockraha, Co. Cork

Parent Representatives

Ms. Una O'Donnell, "Oaklee", Templehill, Carrigrohane, Cork

Mr. John Deasy, Bruach na Glaise, Ballyburden, Waterfall, Co. Cork

Cork County Council Appointees

Rt. Rev. Mgr. Leonard O'Brien, Western Road, Clonakilty, Co. Cork

(Diocese of Cork & Ross)

Rev. Canon George A. Salter, Mount Verdon House, 66 Wellington Road, Cork *(Diocese of Cork, Cloyne & Ross)*

Cllr. Aileen Pyne M.C.C., "Kerry Mist", Duntahane Road, Fermoy, Co. Cork *(Community)*

Ms. Norma Murray, Droomnea House, Pophams Road, Farranrea, Cork
(Community)

COISTE GAIRMOIDEACHAIS CHONTAE CHORCAÍ

County Cork Vocational Education Committee

Customer Service

Introduction

County Cork VEC in partnership with its staff, is committed to improving the level of customer service. The Committee and staff accept that public services should be designed and delivered on the basis of meeting the needs of the individual citizen, business, or community. County Cork VEC and its staff, like organisations across the public service, face the challenge of demonstrating their ability to deliver high quality performance outcomes. This requires individual organisations to set and achieve goals, develop measures for assessing their success and provide detailed information on their own performance. It also requires a greater devolution of responsibility to enable innovation and collaboration at local level and effective reporting mechanisms.

The Customers

Under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) each V.E.C. was required, to adopt a strategic management approach to the planning and development of services. An important element is the delivery and active promotion of a quality customer service. This work continues under the terms of the 'Towards 2016' As a starting point we need to define "who are our customers".

Who are our "internal customers?"

County Cork VEC is committed to ensuring that its staff are recognised as customers.

It appreciates that delivering a quality service to the public is only possible by meeting the needs, of our own internal customers, by achieving high standards of timeliness, courtesy, consultation, information, etc. County Cork VEC accepts that training has an important role in recognising and supporting the needs of staff and in equipping them to provide better services to the public.

The following are recognised and acknowledged as "Internal Customers"

- **Members of County Cork VEC**
- **Members of Sub-Committees of County Cork VEC**
- **Boards of Management of Schools, Colleges and Other Centres**
- **Each member of staff**
- **Management of each school / college and other centre under the jurisdiction of County Cork VEC**

Who are our “external customers?”

The following people are recognised, as “*External Customers*”

Applicants for jobs advertised by the Committee

Applicants for PLC and Third Level Student Grants

Applicants under the School Transport Scheme

Department of Education and Science

Comptroller and Auditor General

Other State Departments, Agencies and Local Authorities

Suppliers of goods and services to the Committee’s Head Office, Schools, Colleges and Other Centres
Trade Unions and Staff Associations representing Staff employed by the Committee

Members of the general public who contact the Committee, its schools, colleges and other Centres
On any of a wide variety of issues, not already covered.

QUALITY SERVICE STANDARDS:

County Cork VEC and its staff are committed to providing a quality service in an efficient and courteous manner to all our customers. We aim to do this in the following manner:

When you visit our Offices we will ensure that:-

You are treated with courtesy

Your privacy will be respected

Your enquiry will be dealt with promptly

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

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

INFORMATION

Commitment: County Cork VEC is committed to providing information on its services, activities and programmes and this is being achieved through a number of different media – electronic, publications, forms, information leaflets, through direct links to its parent Department (Department of Education and Science) and its

representative body, the Irish Vocational Educational Association and other appropriate agencies and organisations.

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

Internal: County Cork VEC is committed to ensure that staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.

Publications: County Cork VEC issues a number of publications. These include the Annual Report, Codes of Practice, Newsletter and information brochures, leaflets etc. In addition, Department of Education & Science publications, the *IVEA News* and other publications serve as a useful means of updating customers and staff on both formal and informal matters relating to the VEC.

Forms: County Cork VEC uses a number of forms to gather the information it needs to provide services in an efficient manner. As part of this Plan, a review of forms was undertaken to ensure that only necessary questions are asked, that forms use clear language and are clearly laid out, that customers and users of the forms are involved in the review and design process, that the design of the forms meet the requirements of both the customer base and modern IT based systems. Necessary changes are implemented on an on-going basis.

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

Action Plan to improve Customer Service

Over the period of this Plan we will:

- Upgrade the main website and ensure that information available is clear, timely and accurate
- Develop the Intranet to improve the sharing of information within County Cork VEC
- Introduce a 'Help-Desk'...This is happening already at a number of levels and does not need to be a fixed location. The question of additional 'Information Points' that may be required to assist with the development of a more 'Customer-focused Culture', will be considered
- Keep all forms and information leaflets under review to ensure relevance etc.
- Develop systems to assist access to information in format appropriate to all staff and all customers, i.e., Braille, text-to-speech, email, paper copy, etc.
- Ensure 'freedom of information' requests will continue to be processed in accordance with statutory provisions.

Performance Indicators:

To assess the achievements of these targets we will:

- Develop feedback systems to obtain customers' view on the accessibility and standard of information
- Carry out internal surveys to ascertain progress with reviews of forms and information leaflets
- Seek the views of customers' on the accessibility of information in any customer surveys undertaken

TIMELINESS AND COURTESY

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

Customer contact is by way of telephone, application forms, by letter or e-mail, and some by personal visits to the Head Office, School Offices, Adult Education and Other Centre Offices.

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

This aspiration can be best achieved by the implementation of the following practices, which County Cork VEC is committed to:-

TELEPHONE CALLS

- Provide a courteous, helpful, friendly and prompt answering service
- Staff available to answer telephone calls at all times during office hours
- Staff will give full name and section when answering

LETTERS AND E-MAILS

- Where appropriate, acknowledge correspondence within 5 working days
- Where warranted, issue a definitive reply within 10 working days – If such a reply cannot be issued within this timeframe, then an interim reply will be issued, informing the sender that the matter is continuing to receive attention
- Ensure replies carry details of contact person and contact telephone number

PERSONAL CALLERS

- Ensure all personal callers are treated with courtesy and sensitivity
- Provide for comfort (seating, etc.) and privacy as appropriate

CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE IN ENSURING THE DELIVERY OF A QUALITY SERVICE

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

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

EVALUATION

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

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

COMPLAINTS

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

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

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

PROCEDURE

- All complaints must be submitted in writing, e-mail or in person as appropriate
- Forms to facilitate the public when making a complaint are available
- An acknowledgement letter confirming receipt of a complaint will be issued within 5 working day of its receipt
- The C.E.O. / Delegated Officer will investigate the matter and issue a decision to the complainant within 2 weeks or as soon as practicable thereafter
- The type, number and nature of the complaints will be collated and analysed

APPEAL

County Cork V.E.C., will maintain a formalised, publicised, assessable, transparent and simple to use system of appeal / review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services. There is a separate agreed procedure, which must be followed in the case of appeals against the recommendations of interview boards.

PROCEDURE FOR APPEALS

- This appeals procedure does not apply in the case of appointments to job vacancies /promotions.
- All appeals must be submitted in writing, e-mail or in person as appropriate.
- An acknowledgement confirming receipt of an appeal will issue within one week of its receipt.
- If a customer remains dissatisfied with the response of the C.E.O. / Delegated Officer they may lodge a complaint with the Committee for resolution.

COISTE GAIRMOIDEACHAIS CHONTAE CHORCAÍ COUNTY CORK VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**Teach Yeats, Cearnóg na Beairice, Baile an Chollaigh, Chontae Chorcaí.
Yeats House, Barrack Square, Ballincollig, Co. Cork.**

Teileafón/Tel: 021/4665000 Faics/Fax: 021/4665090

Ríomhphost/Email: info@cocorkvec.ie

Gréasán/Web: www.cocorkvec.ie

COMPLAINT FORM

To: Chief Executive Officer,
County Cork Vocational Education Committee
Yeats House,
Barrack Square,
Ballincollig,
Co. Cork.

From: _____

Details of complaint _____

Signed: _____

(Signed on behalf of): _____

Date: _____

CONSULTATION AND EVALUATION:

County Cork VEC is committed to providing, a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services, and ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.

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

Consultation on Service Provision and Policy Issues:

The Committee is committed to creating opportunities for input to the policy formulation and service provision process and the Committee has hosted workshops and consultative fora on major policy and legislative issues such as the White Paper on Adult Education, The Education Bill, The Youthwork Act etc. The Committee will consult with the main stakeholders as required by Vocational Education (Amendment) Act 2001 in relation to the preparation of its Education Plan. A comment card has been developed to obtain feedback on our level of service. This comment card will be made available at all of the Committee's public offices and on our website.



Customer Service Questionnaire

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

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

We commit to:

Examine all feedback

Act where possible on suggestions

Deal with any complaints

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

Customer Service Representative

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

Name: Margaret Hughes, Assistant Principal Officer,
Education Support Services,
Address: County Cork VEC,
Yeats House, Barrack Square, Ballincollig,
Co. Cork.
Email: info@cocorkvec.ie
Phone: 021/4665000
Fax : 021/4665090

How did you make contact with our VEC?

Date: _____

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

Other (please specify)

Section/office which provided the service to you:

Please rate our service performance in the following areas:

5-Excellent 4-Very Good 3-Good 2-Fair 1-Unsatisfactory

Availability of assistance

Quality of Information delivered

Quality of Service delivered

Were staff friendly and courteous?

Was your query dealt with in a timely manner?

Were the building and facilities clean and well maintained?

If you have a disability/special need, were our services and information accessible to you?

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

Do you find our opening hours customer-friendly?

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

How did you hear about the services of our VEC?

Newspaper (name) _____

Referred from school (name) _____

Referred from other organisation (eg: FAS) _____

Referred from Adult Education Centre _____

Word of mouth __ Radio __ Leaflet __

Other (please specify) _____

Contact Information (optional)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

COUNTY CORK VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

YEATS HOUSE, BARRACK SQUARE, BALLINCOLLIG,

CO. CORK.

'Phone: 021/4665000 Email: info@cocorkvec.ie

Web: www.cocorkvec.ie

CHOICE:

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

The Committee's Head Office is open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 12.45pm and 1.30 pm 4.30 pm. A voicemail service operates outside of these hours. It is now possible to ring any member of staff once you know the Direct Dial Inwards number (DDI number). Direct dial numbers available in the Committee's Annual Report and other publications and are also available from our website.

The Committee's web address is www.cocorkvec.ie and e-mail address is info@cocorkvec.ie.

Individual e-mail addresses for Head Office Staff are in the following format: initialsurname@cocorkvec.ie

The Committee is adopting a "stepping stone" approach by exploring the following improvements to our services:

Payment Methods:

Electronic Fund Transmission ("paypath") is now the standard method of payment for salaries, wages and student grants and suppliers.

A system to accept payments from debtors e.g. night class students etc. by a greater variety of methods e.g. credit cards, laser cards will also be developed.

Location of Contact Points:

The main point of contact for administrative issues within County Cork VEC is the Head Office – Yeats House, Barrack Square, Ballincollig, Co. Cork.

- Information on educational services is disseminated directly from the relevant school, college and centre. A complete list of these centres is available at www.cocorkvec.ie
- The establishment of an intranet and development of the www.cocorkvec.ie internet site to make information more accessible
- The use of www.cocorkvec.ie to download teaching post application forms began in March 2004. The Committee also accepts such application forms returned by e-mail

Internal Communications:

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

- Regular management team and staff team meetings
- Meeting of VEC representatives with other participating agencies, local community group representatives, local representatives, other interest groups, local and national stakeholders and service users.
- Initiation of a process that will lead to the implementation of an Intranet service for all staff.
- Continue development of the VEC internal newsletter.
- Involvement of all staff in the development of Education, Business, Service and other plans in an appropriate manner.
- The implementation of the recommendations of the Rochford Report

Opening Hours:

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

Information on Services Provided:

The staff in the Education Services Support Pillar will compile a list of all services provided, contact names and numbers for the key personnel involved. They will also review County Cork VEC entries in telephone directories, IPA Diary, website, and will arrange improvements where necessary. They will conduct annual reviews and update accordingly.

Use of New Technologies:

The Committee recognises opportunities / benefits from the provision of services electronically so as to provide more accessible services, better choice and improved service delivery. Methods which could be utilised as follows:

- Use of databases to store information on student support or job applicants
- Use of internet to download and accept applications
- Use of intranet as an internal information point
- Use of website to inform internal customers (employees) of their entitlements – staff handbook on website

Official Languages Act 2003 :

VECs are listed as a public body under the terms of the Official Languages Act 2003. The Committee's administrative area includes Gaeltacht areas. The Committee is, since its foundation in 1930, fully committed to the Government's policies in relation to the Irish Language. The Committee is fully committed to meeting its obligations under the Act in partnership with its staff and relevant Government Departments / Agencies.

Better Co-Ordination:

The County Cork VEC is committed to ensuring a more committed and integrated approach to the delivery of its services. Better co-ordination of services is recognised as an important element in improving customer service

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