

Pobal Customer Action Plan



Pobal and its Customers

The delivery of effective, quality customer service is a priority area for Pobal and forms an integral part of our overall Strategy Statement and the strategies of individual departments within Pobal.

The purpose of this Customer Action Plan and the Customer Charter that accompanies it, is to set out in clear terms how we provide our customers with the highest levels of service.

The Role of Pobal

Pobal's mission is to work on behalf of Government and in partnership with various stakeholders to improve outcomes, particularly for people experiencing disadvantage and social exclusion. Pobal uses programme management experience to bring an integrated approach to programme design, monitoring and delivery. Pobal supports its beneficiary groups to achieve positive outcomes for individuals, groups and communities.

Pobal interacts with a broad spectrum of internal and external customers including the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Department of Social Protection, and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Quality Customer Service

Pobal is wholly committed to providing the highest levels of service to all our customers in accordance with the 12 Principles of Quality Customer Service.

12 Principles of Quality Customer Service

1. Quality Service Standards

Publish a statement that outlines the nature and quality of service which the customer 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. Provide contact details 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 co-ordinated 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.

The way in which Pobal will honour these principles is set out in our Customer Charter (Appendix A).

Measuring and Evaluating Performance

Pobal employs a range of mechanisms to measure and evaluate our performance against the standards set out in our Customer Charter, to ensure that we continue to deliver the highest levels of service to our customers.

In monitoring our performance, we will:

- Benchmark our performance against previous results.
- Use internal information management systems to inform our customer service policies.
- Ensure full compliance with all applicable Health and Safety standards or regulations and carry out Safety Audits and Disability Audits.

Service Standards

- Our Customer Charter outlines in broad terms the level of service all customers of the Pobal are entitled to expect.
- To ensure that we can meet the commitments in our Charter, Pobal strives to evaluate the performance of its customer service based on reliant indicators and to report upon the result of these evaluations.

Performance Indicators

Quality Service

- Ensure that all customers are kept fully informed of the standards of service they can expect to receive from us.
- Ensure that copies of the Customer Charter and Customer Action Plan are made available to customers who wish to have a copy.

Equality/Diversity

- Ensure that a focus on equality/diversity issues are maintained throughout Pobal.
- Ensure that all customers are treated equally and in accordance with relevant legislation.

- Ensure that the needs of staff and visitors with disabilities are identified and fully catered for.

Physical Access

- Ensure that full access to all areas of all our buildings is maintained for people with disabilities and any other customers with specific needs.
- Ensure that all areas of our buildings are clean, comfortable and comply with occupational and safety standards.

Information

- Ensure that all information provided by Pobal is clear, timely, accurate and fully accessible for any customers with specific needs.
- Ensure that material on Pobal's website follows all web publication guidelines in terms of accessibility and official languages equality.
- Ensure that our information distribution channels are kept as up-to-date as possible and that these channels maintain pace with the most recent technological developments and innovations in media and communications.
- Make every effort to ensure that information is made available in as many different formats as practicable.

Timeliness and Courtesy

- Ensure that all customers are treated with courtesy and that all enquiries are dealt with promptly and efficiently.
- Ensure that all staff provide their names when answering telephone calls.
- Ensure that voicemail messages are responded to promptly.
- Ensure that full contact details are provided on all written or e-mail communication from Pobal.

Complaints

- Ensure that all complaints are treated promptly, fairly, impartially and in confidence.
- Ensure that all complaints are acknowledged.
- Ensure that all complaints are investigated fully and that a reply to your complaint is issued promptly.
- Where this is not possible, an interim reply will be given, explaining the reason for the delay and advising when a substantive response will issue.
- Ensure that the details of your complaint remain entirely private if the complainant so wishes.

Choice

- Ensure the availability of multiple contact options for the Pobal, including telephone numbers, e-mail and website addresses.
- Ensure that Pobal makes full use of new and emerging technologies to broaden the choice of services available to customers.

Official Languages Equality

- Ensure that staff can cater for callers who may wish to be dealt with through Irish.

- Ensure that the Annual Report and other information publications and key documents produced by Pobal continue to be made available in Irish.

Better Co-ordination

- Ensure ongoing co-operation across Directorates within Pobal to improve co-ordination on service provision and delivery.

Internal Customer

- Ensure the development of more effective internal channels of communication to allow staff to gain a fuller understanding of all aspects of the role of Pobal.

Training

- We recognise that in order for staff to provide a quality service they must be familiar with the policies and practices outlined in the Customer Action Plan and with the commitments given in our Customer Charter. We are fully committed to investing in appropriate customer service training for staff and to regular refresher training where necessary, particularly for those members of staff in regular contact with members of the general public.

Statutory Obligations

- In addition to undertakings given in our Customer Action Plan and Customer Charter, we believe it is important that all Pobal staff are aware of their statutory obligations. Pobal is fully committed to fulfilling all relevant statutory obligations in relation to Data Protection, Equality, Freedom of Information, Prompt Payment of Accounts and Safety, Health & Welfare at Work.

How to Contact Us

Head Office - Pobal, Holbrook House, Holles Street, Dublin 2. / Teach Holbrook, Sráid Holles, Baile Átha Cliath, Éire.

Telephone: 01 511 7000; Fax: 01 511 7981;

Email: enquiries@pobal.ie;

EIR Code: D02 EY84.

Pobal Customer Charter

Pobal's Mission

Pobal is a not-for-profit company that manages programmes on behalf of the Irish Government and the EU.

The Mission of Pobal is to promote social inclusion, reconciliation and equality through integrated social and economic development within communities.

Our commitments to you

In managing our Programmes, we are committed to the principles of community development delivered through a beneficiary-centred approach that reflects our value-base and ethos. In this regard, we make the following commitments to you, our customer:

1. Courtesy

Pobal is committed to interacting with you in an open, supportive, courteous and professional manner. We will work with you in a way that fosters mutual understanding, open communication, positive regard and mutual respect.

2. Timeliness

Pobal will offer you a prompt, accurate & efficient response in all of our dealings with you. All verified payments will be made to you in compliance with the relevant sections of The Prompt Payment of Accounts Act 1997 and the European Communities (Late Payment in Commercial Transactions) Regulations 2002.

3. Transparency

Pobal is committed to transparency in all of our decision-making processes (in line with the Freedom of Information Acts, 1997, 2003 and the Data Protection Acts, 1988, 2003). We will be professional, honest, straightforward and consistent in our dealings with you to ensure openness, equity and impartiality at all times.

4. Access and communications

Pobal will use accessible and user-friendly methods of communication including our website and a range of social media. We will meet people in a mutually convenient and accessible location – a Pobal office or an alternative facility that is compliant with current occupational health and safety standards.

5. Efficiency

Pobal will endeavour to offer you an efficient and supportive service through the provision of a regionalised staff structure with named contact personnel. This will

facilitate the building of strong working relationships and foster trust and responsibility leading to solution-focused attitudes and outcomes.

6. Enhanced service coordination

Pobal recognises the need for and the added-value of coordinated services to improve and strengthen quality service delivery at local level.

In pursuance of this objective, Pobal will link and work collaboratively with a range of structures/organisations at national, regional and local level to help advance greater coordination of the type of services we deliver.

Our overall aim is to benefit our target groups, many of whom are severely disadvantaged and socially excluded.

7. Equality and diversity

Pobal will conduct its business in strict adherence to Equality Legislation and specifically by working in an informed and mindful way of the nine grounds on which discrimination is prohibited. Our work and interactions will also be guided by Pobal's in-house Equality Framework which we review on a continuous basis.

8. Reviews

Pobal will implement a formalised, transparent and accessible system of review (appropriate to the Programme you are dealing with) for beneficiaries who are dissatisfied with our service. For example, this may relate to the accuracy or quality of information, or to decision-making with regard to grant allocation or financial decisions, or to dissatisfaction with our inter-personal communication with, and to you.

Requests for reviews/appeals regarding public procurement competitions are strictly regulated and should be pursued in accordance with the relevant legislation.

9. Feedback from and to you

Pobal welcomes and encourages constructive feedback from you, both positive and negative, on any aspect of our service delivery, or with regard to your local work and practice. We will use this feedback as part of our commitment to continuously improve our service to you.

It may also assist us in our task of identifying good practice for wider dissemination to other practitioners and policy makers. Pobal will provide you with honest, evidence-based and constructive feedback that is appropriate to the service or programme that you are involved with.

10. Evaluation and Reporting

Pobal strives for constant improvement in its customer service. In obtaining its goal of top quality customer service, Pobal is committed to reviewing and evaluating its customer service delivery and reporting on the outcomes of this delivery.

11. Official Languages

Pobal will make every effort to accommodate you if you wish to conduct your business through the medium of Irish and we will comply with the Official Languages Act 2003 within specified timescales.

12. Complaints

Pobal will ensure that making a complaint is as easy as possible for you. We will treat your complaint seriously and deal with it promptly, in confidence and in a fair and impartial manner, mindful of our obligations under the Freedom of Information Act. We will learn from your complaint and use it as a basis for reviewing and improving our service to our beneficiaries.

How to make a Complaint:

All complaints must be made in writing (by email or letter) and must state clearly that a complaint is being made, the basis for the complaint and what follow up action is envisaged as a result of the complaint.

For the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act, 2014 you should also state whether you require your complaint to be treated in a strictly confidential manner. Please also note that:

Your complaint should be sent by email to complaints@pobal.ie or by post to Complaints, Pobal, Holbrook House, Holles Street, Dublin 2 D02 EY84.

If you are unhappy with the response to your complaint, the Executive Director of Corporate Services in the case of a general complaint, or the Executive Director of Community Supports and Services in the case of a complaint about a specific programme, can review. If you are still unhappy with the response, you can refer the matter to the Office of the Ombudsman at the following details:

Office of the Ombudsman
18 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2
T: 01 678 5222
LoCall: 1890 223 030
ombudsman@ombudsman.irlgov.ie

How to contact us

Pobal,
Holbrook House,
Holles Street,
Dublin 2
D02 EY84

Telephone: 01 511 7000
Fax: 01 511 7981
Email: enquiries@pobal.ie
For further information on Pobal, please visit our website at www.pobal.ie

Appendix B

Pobal Complaints Policy

Pobal is committed to providing an accessible, transparent and easy to use system of dealing with complaints.

Our commitment to you

Our policy is to:

- Make sure all complaints are investigated fairly, promptly and in confidence;
- Handle all complaint information sensitively, following all relevant data protection requirements;
- Learn from complaints and use them to review and improve our service.

What is a complaint?

Pobal defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about an action or lack of action by Pobal or concerning the standard or quality of a service performed by Pobal.

An example of a complaint regarding an action or lack of action would include where Pobal provides the wrong information, or bases a decision on a misinterpretation of information.

An example of where poor standards might result in a complaint would include any cases of a lack of courtesy displayed by a member of staff or excessive delay in dealing with a reasonable request.

In limited circumstances a complaint may be excluded from the Pobal complaints procedure to prevent an inappropriate use of time and resources. This can be the case where a complaint is pursued without reasonable grounds, is conducted in a manner so as to cause delay, detriment or distress or is made for an improper purpose.

How to make a complaint?

A complaint can be received by phone, email or by post at the following details:

Complaints
Pobal,
Holbrook House,
Holles Street,
Dublin 2. D02 EY84

Phone: + 353 1 5117000
Email: complaints@pobal.ie

Response times

Your complaint will be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within 10 working days. A definitive reply will normally be sent to you within 20 working days. If there is a delay in responding we will keep you informed of our progress.

Review

If you are unhappy with the response, you may ask for a review by a more senior person at Pobal by writing to the Company Secretary. Response time will normally be 20 working days. If this is not possible, because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report will be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given. The decision at this stage is final.

Referral to the Ombudsman

If you are still unhappy with the response, you can contact the Ombudsman at the following details:

Office of the Ombudsman,
18 Lower Leeson Street,
Dublin 2 D02 HE97

Telephone: +353 1 6785222
LoCall: 1890 223030

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman/irlgov.ie
Web: www.ombudsman.gov.ie

Other Complaints

Pobal deals with specific complaints in different ways. Examples of types of complaints are:

- Complaints about an organisation in contract with Pobal;
- Complaints received into Pobal about an organization in contract with or supported by Pobal will be dealt with on a case by case basis;
- Complaints about a department;
- Complaints in relation to a government department should be directed to the specific department or the Office of the Ombudsman.