

National Council for Special Education Interim¹ Customer Charter 2017- 2018

Our Mission Statement

We support an inclusive education system that enables students and adults with special educational needs to achieve their potential.

Our Aim

One of our key service goals in our Statement of Strategy (2017- 2021) is to support schools to enable students with special educational needs achieve better outcomes. We aim to provide our customers with a professional, efficient, courteous and quality service. The purpose of this Customer Charter is to set the standard of service our customers can expect from the NCSE.

(Note: This Customer Charter is not intended to create or confer new legal rights for customers.)

Our Commitment to our Customers

Customer satisfaction is very important to us and we are committed to the Government's [12 Guiding Principles for Quality Customer Services](#). We aim to achieve this by:

- Giving our customers the best possible service and advice.
- Treating customers properly, fairly, impartially and with courtesy.
- Aiming to ensure that rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation are upheld in the delivery of our services.
- Aiming to meet any special needs our customers may have.

Contacting the NCSE

When you contact the NCSE, we will deal with your enquiry efficiently and promptly and treat you with courtesy and respect.

Contact by Telephone

Our office hours are Monday to Friday, 9am – 12.45 pm and 2pm – 5.45 pm (5.30pm on Fridays).

- Our staff will answer your telephone call as quickly as possible. We will give our name, the name of the section or area you have called and we will be courteous and helpful.
- Our aim is to provide customers with clear and correct information. If we cannot answer your questions straight away or in full, we will try and put you in contact with someone who can assist you, or take your details and call you back as soon as possible.
- If a person is unavailable, or if you are calling outside of our office hours and you are connected to a voicemail, we will aim to ensure that you receive a prompt call back.
- Our local support service staff spend a considerable amount of time visiting schools and will therefore not always be available to take phone calls. Should you leave a message, they will access their voice mail on a daily basis and will ensure that you receive a response as soon as possible.

¹ In 2017, the services of the Special Education Support Service (SESS), the National Behavioural Support Service (NBSS) and the Visiting Teacher Service (VTS) for Children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Children who are Blind/Visually Impaired were incorporated into the NCSE. The NCSE is developing and expanding its services to reflect our new support services. We will be preparing a new three year Customer Charter and Customer Action Plan when this development process is complete. This Customer Charter is therefore an interim Charter for the specified period.

Written Contact

- If you contact us by letter, email or fax, we will acknowledge your correspondence. We will keep you informed of progress, if relevant, and aim to issue a final response in a timely manner. If we cannot do this promptly, we will endeavour to write to explain why and tell you when you can expect a full reply.
- All correspondence from us will be in clear and plain language and respond in full to your queries. Our contact details including our name, telephone number and an email address will be included in all written correspondence and replies.
- In the case of emails, an automated email response will issue when staff are out of the office, indicating a return date and an alternative contact if required.

Personal Contact

- If you need to contact our local support service staff in person, we will arrange to meet you by appointment at suitable and agreed times in locations which are as convenient as possible such as schools, education centres and health centres.
- We will provide you with the maximum level of privacy possible.
- We will be friendly, professional, helpful and courteous in our dealings with you.

Equality/Diversity

- We are fully committed to ensuring that customer rights to equal treatment under equality legislation are upheld.
- We provide equality of access to our services and endeavour to accommodate diversity as provided for by equality legislation. We will consult with our customers to make sure their accessibility or other needs are looked after and will assist our customers with specific needs in accessing information or services as required.
- The NCSE Access Officer will arrange extra help if necessary for customers who wish to use the NCSE's information and services. Contact details for our Access Officer are available on our website.

Providing Information

- We aim to provide clear, accurate, accessible, relevant and up-to-date information to our customers through our staff, our publications and our website- www.ncse.ie. Information on the former services of the SESS, the NBSS and VTS will be held for a period of time on their original websites until it is incorporated into the one NCSE website. The websites for these services are- www.nbss.ie; www.sess.ie and www.education.ie
- We will ensure that important public information material is available through a variety of formats.
- We will comply with the Freedom of Information Acts and the Data Protection Acts. Contact details for our FOI and Data Protection Officers are available on our website.

Services through Irish

- We will ensure that people who wish to conduct their business through Irish are facilitated, and we will respond in Irish to correspondence received in Irish.
- We will respond in Irish, to telephone callers who wish to speak in Irish, immediately where possible, or offer to have the call returned promptly by a member of staff who can deal with the query in Irish.
- We publish our Annual Report, Strategy Statement, Customer Charter and other important documents in both Irish and English. We comply with the requirements of the Official Languages Act, 2003.

Complaints and Appeals

If you have a complaint about any aspect of our service, please let us know and we will try to rectify the problem. We would encourage our customers to raise any issues or complaints with the relevant NCSE staff member involved or with his/her direct supervisor. We would hope that most issues will be efficiently and satisfactorily resolved in this way. Where this is not possible, we have formal procedures for dealing with customer complaints. Full details of our complaints procedures and forms are published on our [here on our website](#). Formal written complaints using the appropriate forms should be sent to:

NCSE Council Support Unit,
National Council for Special Education,
1-2 Mill Street,
Trim,
Co. Meath.

If your complaint remains unsolved, you have the option of pursuing the matter further with the Ombudsman or the Ombudsman for Children (contact details below).

Office of the Ombudsman, 18 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2. Tel. (01) 6395600 LoCall 1890 22 30 30 email: ombudsman@ombudsman.irlgov.ie www.ombudsman.gov.ie	Office of the Ombudsman for Children, Millennium House, 52-56 Great Strand Street, Dublin 1, Tel. (01) 8656800 LoCall 1800 202040 email: ombudsman@ombudsman.irlgov.ie www.oco.ie
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Appeals relating to the allocation of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) posts

We have a specific and separate appeal process relating to our decisions on the allocation of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) posts to schools. The appeals process is published on our website.

Feedback and Consultation

We have established a Consultative Forum, which is representative of our stakeholders and which we use to seek views and feedback on major issues. We will continue to use this Forum and will engage with it on key issues and about our services.

In addition we meet with national organisations representing parents, schools, teachers, disability/advocacy bodies and other state agencies on a regular basis to seek their views and provide information on our services. Through our local staff we communicate and consult with all those who use our services. We will continue to use these channels to engage in meaningful consultation with our customers to support the evaluation and improvement of our services.

In addition, we welcome your comments and suggestions about our service and how we can improve at any time. Please let us know what you think of our service or this Charter- positive or negative, by submitting feedback, comments or suggestions. You can email your feedback to csu@ncse.ie or send it to:

NCSE Council Support Unit,
National Council for Special Education,
1-2 Mill Street,
Trim,
Co. Meath.

Help us to help you

You, as our customer, also have an important role to play in helping us offer you the best possible service. You can help us in other ways too if you:

- Quote any relevant reference number in all communications with us and provide full relevant information or documents on a timely basis as required by your school or our staff.
- Follow any guidelines or procedures which are relevant to the service you require.
- E-mail, write to or call our staff directly using the direct contact details we have provided on our website.
- If our lines are busy or unanswered, please use our voicemail and leave your name and number so we may call you back.
- Make an appointment to meet our local staff when you need to meet us.
- If you have internet access, check our website- www.ncse.ie and the websites for the other services now within the NCSE for information you may need - www.nbss.ie; www.sess.ie and www.education.ie.
- Contact your local school directly where it would be in a position to deal with your query.
- If you wish to make a complaint, consult our guidelines and procedures available [here on our website](#), be as specific as possible and differentiate between complaints about policy and staff conduct.
- Treat our staff courteously and with respect, as you would wish to be treated yourself.

Further information and how to contact us

Further information about our services may be obtained on our website- www.ncse.ie and the websites of the services now within the NCSE- www.nbss.ie, www.sess.ie and www.education.ie. You can also contact us directly. We will endeavour to keep our contact details on our website up to date at all times.