

Appendix 1: The 15 Principles of Good Service Design

The 15 universal principles for designing services that work for users were developed by Lou Downe from The School of Good Services.

The team will adopt and use these principles to design, assess, and monitor the quality of Medway Council services.

1. Be easy to find

The service must be able to be found by a user with no prior knowledge of the task they set out to do. For example, someone who wants to 'learn to drive' must be able to find their way to 'get a driving licence' as part of that service unaided.

2. Clearly explain the purpose of your service

The purpose of the service must be clear to users at the start of using the service. That means a user with no prior knowledge must understand what the service will do for them and how it will work.

3. Set the expectations a user has of your service

A good service must clearly explain what is needed from the user to complete the service and what that user can expect from the service provider in return. This includes things like how long something will take to complete, how much it will cost or if there are restrictions on the types of people who can use the service.

4. Enable each user to complete the outcome they set out to do

A good service helps the user to achieve a goal – be that start a business, learn to drive or move house – in as much of a seamless stream of events as possible. This starts from the moment that a user is considering doing something to the moment they have achieved their goal, including any steps needed to support the user after they have reached their goal.

5. Work in a way that is familiar

People base their understanding of the world on previous experiences. If there's an established custom for your service that benefits a user, your service should conform to that custom. But be mindful that not all customs benefit users – some have been put in for the benefit of the organisation running the service, rather than users. Avoid customs that negatively affect your user or those that are inefficient or outdated.

6. Require no prior knowledge to use

A service should not work in a way that assumes any prior knowledge from the user.

7. Be agnostic of organisational structures The service must work in a way that does not unnecessarily expose a user to the internal structures of the organisation providing the service.

8. Require the minimum possible steps to complete

A good service requires as minimal interaction from a user as possible to complete the outcome that they're trying to achieve. Sometimes this will mean proactively meeting a user's needs without them instigating an interaction with your organisation. This may also mean occasionally slowing the progress of a service in order to help a user absorb information or make an important decision.

9. Be consistent throughout

The service should look and feel like one service throughout, regardless of the channel it is delivered through. The language used should be consistent, as should visual styles and interaction patterns.

10. Have no dead ends

A service should direct all users to a clear outcome, regardless of whether the user is eligible or suitable to use the service. No user should be left behind or stranded within a service without knowing how to continue.

11. Be usable by everyone, equally

The service must be usable by everyone who needs to use it, regardless of their circumstances or abilities. No one should be less able to use the service than anyone else.

12. Encourage the right behaviours from users and service providers

The service should encourage safe, productive behaviours from users and staff that are mutually beneficial. For users, the service should not set a precedent for behaviours that may put the user at harm in other circumstances – for example, providing data without knowing its use. For staff, this means they should not be incentivised to provide a bad service to users, for example, through short call-handling time targets.

13. Respond to change quickly

The service should respond quickly and adaptively to a change in a user's circumstance and make this change consistently throughout the service. For example, if a user changes their phone number online, their new phone number should be recognised in a face-to-face service.

14. Clearly explain why a decision has been made

When a decision is made within a service, it should be obvious to a user why this decision has been made and clearly communicated at the point at which it's made. A user should also be given a route to contest this if they need to.

15. Make it easy to get human assistance

A service should always provide an easy route for users to speak to a human if they need to