

Public Services Customer Insight Forum

Remit

The term “customer insight” covers more than customer research; it embraces not only customer opinion but also behaviour, hopes and desires.

Sir David Varney’s Review of Service Transformation characterised it as:

“A deep truth about the citizen based on their behaviour, experience, beliefs, needs or desires, that is relevant to the task or issue and rings bells with target people¹”

With a continued move to a more evidence based policy approach within local and national government and also a focus on the performance of front line delivery of public services, “customer insight” becomes much more important for policy making and delivery practitioners alike.

Indeed the Varney Review rightly talks about the importance of moving from a process driven approach to a customer driven one, with exploitation of customer insight as a strategic asset - one that is not currently utilised to full effect across all government:

“Deep insight into customer needs, behaviours and motivations, plus the ability for citizens and businesses to have better information on the services on offer, is all important for the design of public services that support the Government’s desired policy outcomes.”

The Forum has been established to support the Delivery Council by providing expert input on Customer Insight. In turn,

The Council will provide expert input into cross-cutting agendas supporting the transformation of Government and the building of capacity in delivery skills and competencies specifically in relation to the "Transformational Government" strategy to drive citizen and business centred services.²

Role of Members

The Forum functions as a self-empowered team, in which individual members:

- Spread good practice and the sharing of information / learning

¹ Taken from GCN’s Engage programme: <http://engage.comms.gov.uk/>

² Taken from the Delivery Council’s Terms of Reference

- The CIF should act as a 'centre of excellence' and promote the role of customer insight across the public sector.
 - It should encourage sharing of information about customer facing issues as well as disseminating information on general issues of relevance e.g. social trends
- Help facilitate cross-government service transformation by investigating barriers to change from a customer perspective.
- E.g. e-enablement – by informing the Delivery Council and working with the Contact Council to understand customer behaviour and preferences in relation to access and channel use
- Act as a resource to inform major cross-government policy issues or delivery initiatives by the provision of targeted, timely insight
- E.g. looking at some of the 'mega' issues that are on the policy agenda and helping to understand public perception, how specific policy strands impact on this and what this means in terms of service delivery. (E.g. issues surrounding the choice agenda, environment, crime etc.)
- Provide input and guidance around the use of customer insight and engagement in relation to the Service Transformation Delivery Plan
- Establish the training requirements for achieving competence in Customer Insight for public sector service providers
- Develop in partnership with the Government Communications Network a 'tool box' of techniques and methodologies for Customer Insight

Operating Model

The Customer Insight Forum is a network of the heads of insight from the public sector.

The Forum has the following characteristics:

4. Membership

- It is chaired by a non executive chairman. Secretariat and other full time support is provided by the Delivery and Transformation Group in the Cabinet Office
- It links to the Delivery Council through its chair, who is also a standing member of the Council
- It links to the Insight Forum for Business through a senior representative from Businesslink, who is also chair of the Business Insight Forum
- It links to the Government Communications Network's Engage programme and to the Share and Research Group through a senior representative from the Central Office of Information who is also chair of the Share and Research Group
- It will link to the proposed Contact Council whose role, as recommended by Varney, will be to collect and assess departmental performance against agreed benchmarks and performance indicators, to promote cross departmental collaboration and to disseminate good practice arising from positive examples of innovation.
- Members will be expected to seek a collective view on key topics and recommendations. To inform this, subsets of the Forum might complete pieces of work between meetings for discussion and individual members will be expected to give a proportion of their time to this end
- It is important that each of the main customer facing departments is actively represented and that the person nominated to attend carries sufficient weight in their organisation so as to influence colleagues. Forum members from particular departments should be endorsed, where appropriate, by Delivery Council members and their work on the Forum should be formally recognised in their job description and appraisal.
- It is proposed that a sister group to of the Customer Insight Forum with representatives local government be established as there is a clear responsibility in this area for the delivery of the majority of public services
- Meetings will be held every six weeks and be of a half day duration