

Pendle Borough Council Customer and Digital Strategy 2025 – 2028



CONTENTS

	Page
Contents	1
Foreword	2
Introduction	3
What do we mean by customer experience?	4
Residents	4
Visitors	4
Businesses	4
Students	4
Partners	4
What do we mean by digital?	5
Principles	5
Our Vision	6
What we know now	6
By implementing this strategy:	7
Residents	7
Businesses	7
Partners	7
Staff	8
We will...	9
Customer	9
Council	9
Place	10
Technology	10
Measuring our success	11
By 2028	11

Foreword

A key action in our Council Plan is to provide high quality services and facilities to our residents, businesses and visitors. We strive to understand the needs of our customers, and we will use this knowledge to deliver the best possible experience for you. We want to make sure that our contact channels are effective and designed to meet your needs.

We will work with our customers and partners to develop our digital channels to make contacting us as easy as doing business with leading e-retailers.

Improving how we deliver services to customers, and embracing digital ways of providing services, information and transactions will allow us to meet our customers' expectations to engage with us online. This means we can deliver better and more efficient services, and guarantee we are making the best use of our resources.

We strive to understand
the needs of our
customers, and we will
use this knowledge to
deliver the best possible
experience for you.



Introduction

Pendle is an ambitious council. We're ambitious for our residents, our local businesses, our visitors and our staff. We want our customers to have the best possible experience when they get in touch with us, and we want to make the most of the opportunities that digital technology provides to help us do this.

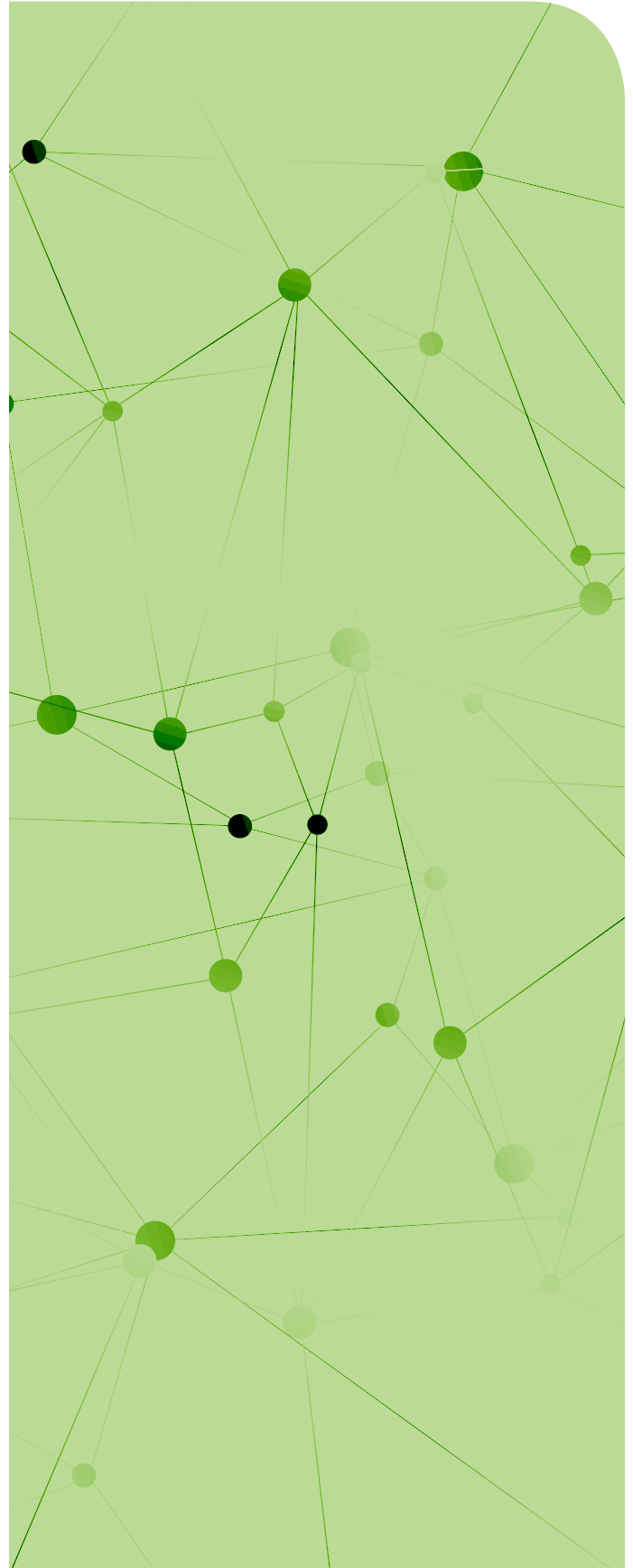
The pace of digital change is fast and constantly evolving. This is true in our daily lives, and in the way the council works. As a result, the expectations of our residents and businesses around how they find information or interact with us has changed and we know people expect seamless, intuitive digital services.

To meet these expectations, we need to understand what our customers want from us and design our services and our partner services in a way that works for you.

This Customer and Digital Strategy is a way for us to set out what we and our partners are going to do to make sure we understand your needs. We want to have the right culture, information, and skills and have the right approach to using the appropriate digital tools to meet your needs.

We will refresh this strategy regularly to make sure it stays current. We will continuously act on feedback to keep improving the way we provide services to you.

The Customer and Digital Strategy will be aligned with the ICT strategy to make the most of our IT systems and technology to improve the customer journey.



What do we mean by customer experience?

Customer experience is the impression people have of Pendle Borough Council when they contact us or use a council service. Our customers vary from:

Residents

- We have 95,800 people living in the borough in 41,700 households (Government Dwelling Stock 2024).

Visitors

- We have 2.5million tourist visitors to Pendle each year.

Businesses

- We have 2,965 businesses (ONS business counts 2023).
- 89% of these are micro (up to nine employees).
- 1 in 10 Pendle businesses are in the manufacturing industry.
- We have 31,000 workers in Pendle (ONS Annual Population Survey 2023).

Students

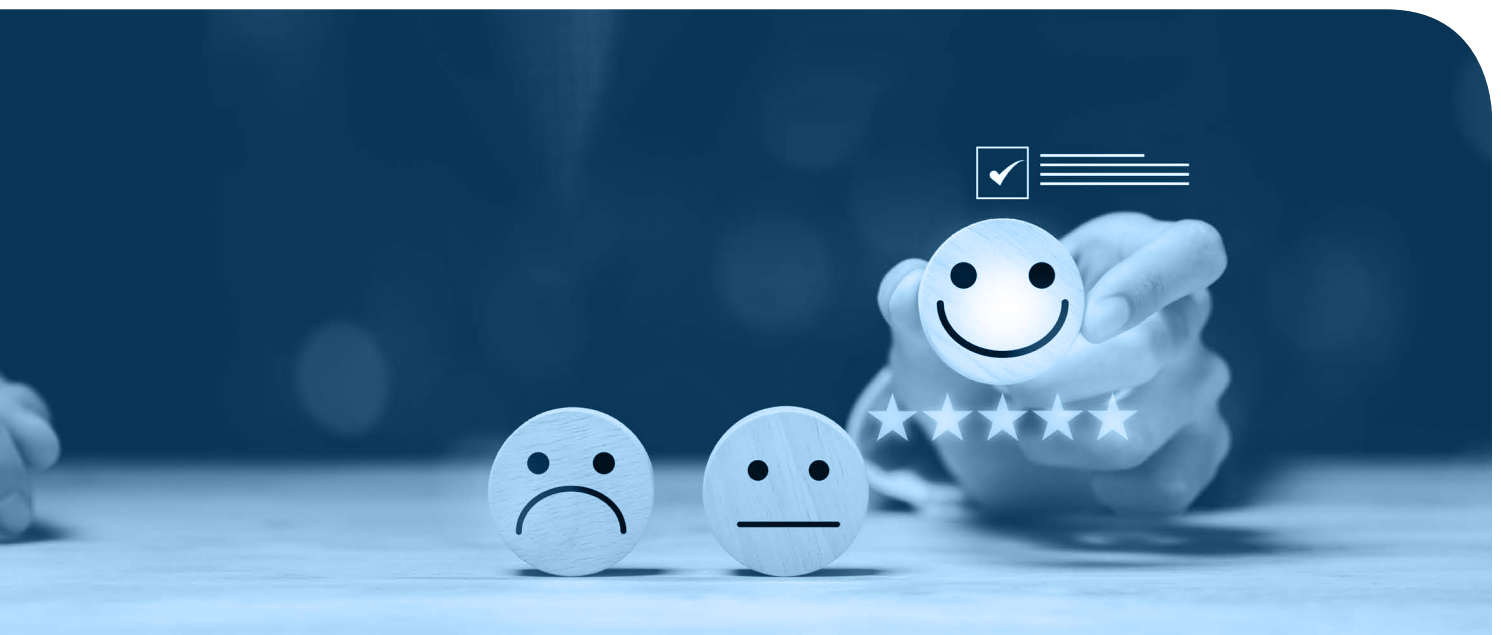
- The student (Nelson and Colne College) population is around 1,650.

Partners

- Liberata UK help us to deliver services including:
 - Customer Services
 - Human Resources
 - IT
 - Revenues and Benefits
- Lancashire County Council
- Town and Parish Councils

Additional information on our customers

- 26.7% of residents are Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh (Census 2021).
- 6% of households in Pendle have no people using English as their main language. (Census 2021)
- In Pendle, Punjabi and Urdu were second and third ranked main languages followed by Polish, Romanian and Lithuanian.
- 18% of people in Pendle are disabled (Census 2021).



What do we mean by digital?

“Digital: applying the culture, practices, processes and technologies of the internet-era to respond to people’s raised expectations”

Tom Loosemore – Public Digital

This definition covers four key areas which we need to get right to give our customers a positive experience.

Digital is not just about technology, it’s about having practices and processes which make sense, are simple and work. It’s having the appropriate technology to meet the needs of both internal and external users, support our business processes, and is secure, flexible and simple to use. It is also about making sure we have the right organisational culture in place which supports and encourages our staff to optimise the use of digital to meet the needs of their customers.

Principles

As an organisation we have chosen to adopt a set of principles to work to, which will make sure we provide the best possible customer experience.

We will:

1. Always put the customer (you) at the heart of everything we do.
2. Design effective digital channels that are easy, efficient and reliable to use making them your preferred way to access council services, support and information.
3. Seek feedback and evidence to improve how we do things.
4. Create a culture that listens to what you want and takes the time to understand what you need.
5. Continue to recognise that some customers need support to contact us digitally and maintain alternative ways of contacting us for our most vulnerable customers.
6. Support our staff to provide the best possible experience to you and invest in their training and understanding of digital and good customer service.
7. Invest in the right technology to meet our ambitions.

We will also work to the Government Service Standard, which includes the importance of understanding user needs and ensuring we design for accessibility. The standard has been designed to help organisations create and run great digital public services.



Our Vision

To transform the way our customers interact with the council making it easy for them to find the information and services they need to improve their lives.

What we know now

In 2025, we undertook a customer engagement survey to better understand how customers are currently contacting the council and to help inform strategy implementation. The survey was face to face, involving 382 residents, of which 152 had contacted the council in the last 12 months. The main findings suggest that:

Only one in ten of all those surveyed used the website and webforms to contact the us. Telephone is still the most common means of contacting us.

Satisfaction with digital contact is higher than phone contact satisfaction.

Reasons for non-use of our website include convenience, preferring to speak to a person and lack of knowledge on how to use the website.

Suggested improvements to the website and webforms include:

- improvements to navigation and functionality
- improved access for elderly and disabled people
- quicker response time
- making the system 'more user friendly' and 'less complicated'.

These improvements will be included in the delivery plan for this strategy.



By implementing this strategy:

Residents

- We will learn what residents' key needs and priorities are and take a proactive approach to resolving issues in the borough which affect them before they need to contact us.
- Will have the best possible experience every time they contact us.
- Will find it easy to contact us when it is convenient for them, and will get a response which resolves their issue, query or need first time and within a reasonable timescale.
- Will experience digital services that are so effective and easy to use, they become the preferred way to get in touch with us.
- For those that cannot get online we will maintain our offline services (telephone service etc), protecting these for our non-digital residents.
- We will support our non-digital customers to access services online both from the Council and from other crucial suppliers such as utilities, banks and insurance companies.
- We will always be honest about what we can and can't do and the reasons for this.
- Will be informed of the development of services and see their feedback acted.
- Will have confidence that we are committed to providing the best possible customer experience, have the staff support and culture to achieve this, the right technology and security in place and take the protection of residents' data seriously in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Customer Journey

Our customer improvement work is about making it easy for you to complete tasks with us without having to repeat information, to save you time and effort and help you get a resolution quicker.

Businesses

- We will learn what businesses' needs and priorities are and communicate relevant information and opportunities directly to them.
- Will be encouraged to stay and grow in Pendle.
- New businesses will be attracted to Pendle, helping increase the availability of careers for residents.
- Will find the transactions they need to complete with us simple and easy to do online.

Partners

- We recognise that our partners are also our customers, and we will make contacting us and transacting with us simple.
- We will work collaboratively with our partners so that we can deliver joined-up services where possible, extending our services to empower partners (e.g. being able to report issues directly).
- Our partnership working will benefit from us having a clear strategy in place, which can be shared with partners to identify common areas of interest and opportunities to work together to deliver improvements.
- We will work with our partners to continue to support improved digital infrastructure and skills in the borough.

Staff

- Will feel supported to engage with their customers, both when developing a new service or way for residents to contact us on an ongoing basis.
- Will have the tools and technologies they need to deliver the best possible customer experience to residents.
- Will be supported to take responsibility for resolving customer issues first time.
- Will work in a culture which places the customer at the heart of everything we do and is supported by the leadership team.
- Will be supported and encouraged to turn ideas for improving the customer experience into action.

Staff Skills

Our staff are being supported to adopt new equipment and technologies which allow them to work flexibly and more effectively to meet the needs of our customers.

We recognise that our partners are also our customers, and we will make contacting us and transacting with us simple.



We will...

Customer

We will provide you with the best possible customer experience.

We will do this through developing a better understanding of your needs so that we can be more proactive and resolve issues for you without you needing to contact us. We will make sure that your needs are always at the heart of any service we provide.

When you need to contact us, our digital services will offer such a seamless process that going online becomes the natural choice for many. Your experience will be easy, reliable and transparent. You will be kept up to date and you will get a resolution which meets your needs. We will make sure our online information is accessible, easy to understand and designed with our customers in mind, so we can make it easier for you to self-serve and make informed choices based on accurate and useful information.

We will explore how technology such as artificial intelligence (AI) can be used in some scenarios to help us understand the needs of our customers and support demand on our services so we can provide a better service for you.

We'll be interested in what's important to you, what your needs are, and how you feel when accessing any of our services.

We know that not all of our customers are able to contact us digitally. For those that want to be able to do this we will support you to build your digital confidence. We will keep our telephone and other non-digital channels and services for those who still need them.

Council

We will seek customer feedback. We will review our services ourselves, using data and information to understand what improvements we can make to ensure we're always providing you with the best possible experience.

We will support our staff to take time to understand your needs and empower them to make sure we are helping resolve your request, question or issue the first time you contact us. We will make sure the staff are in the right place to meet your needs and have the right technology to do this effectively.

We recognise that our staff need support as we use more digital technology, and we will work with them to ensure they are confident in delivering services and engaging with you in this way. This will help us deliver services in the most efficient way and means our staff can confidently support you in using digital services too.

Getting the way we provide services to you and the use of digital right will help us meet our financial challenge. The more you use our digital channels, the less need there will be for our more expensive telephone and non-digital services. Looking at how we can use new technologies to automate parts of services, and developing techniques to use our data to make better informed decisions gives us opportunities to make savings to protect our core frontline services.

We want to continue to explore how technology can help you, and our services, so we understand and can meet your needs.

We will encourage all residents to take part in consultations and engagement activities and make it easy for you to access these.

Place

We will work with our local public and voluntary sector partners to make sure we are delivering joined-up services to our shared customers.

We are fortunate to have the number one college in the country for A Level progress and GCSE Mathematics, the number one college in Lancashire for 16-18 Advanced Apprenticeship achievement and number one college in the country based on student satisfaction - Nelson and Colne College, in our borough (June 2024 Nelson and Colne College website www.nelson.ac.uk/about-us/).

We have received significant funding from the Government through Levelling Up, UKSPF and Town Deal to invest and improve our towns.

Technology

We know we shouldn't try to run before we can walk, and we know that not all our technology works as it should to provide our best possible customer experience. We have big ambitions, but we need to get the basics right first and have already started work on this.

We will work with public sector, government and technology partners to help us meet our technology ambitions, learn from others and share what we are good at with partners to help them improve their services too.

We are keen to explore how we can better use our data and information to help provide the best possible customer experience. This will include exploring how automation and machine learning techniques can help us make the best use of the information we have, preventing issues before they occur and supporting new, more efficient ways to deliver our services.

The better we get at knowing the needs, preferences and behaviours of our residents, the better we can be at delivering an effective and proactive customer experience. We want to better use our data internally to inform our decision making, and how we run and provide our services. We recognise that the more we do digitally, the stronger we need to be around our cyber-security. Protecting your data will always be a key priority, and we will be transparent about how we are using and sharing data. We take our data protection obligations seriously and will always work within the relevant data protection legislation.

This work will be underpinned by a digital infrastructure that is agile enough to meet future challenges in an increasingly digital world. This infrastructure will be delivered through our ICT Strategy.

We recognise that our staff need support as we use more digital technology, and we will work with them to ensure they are confident in delivering services and engaging with you in this way.

Measuring our success

By 2028

Customer

- **Our customers will...**
 - be choosing to use our digital services, which will be designed to meet their needs.
- **Pendle Borough Council will...**
 - design more online services and ensure they are made with an understanding of user need.
- **Pendle Borough Council will...**
 - be accessible – designing for everyone from the start.

Technology

- **Pendle Borough Council will...**
 - use data to take a proactive approach to problem solving, minimising the number of service requests that customers generate.
- **Pendle Borough Council will...**
 - make the most of the technology we have and invest in new technologies where there is a benefit to customer contact.
- **Staff will...**
 - be supported to make effective use of their technology to support our customers.

Place

- **Our residents will...**
 - have a seamless experience through the council working efficiently and collaboratively across departments – reducing repetition and follow up contacts.
- **Pendle Borough Council will...**
 - engage with and support our communities.

Council

- **Pendle Borough Council will...**
 - view staff as users, creating processes and systems that are accessible and efficient for our officers.
- **Pendle Borough Council will...**
 - measure and evaluate customer satisfaction when we are contacted and act on the results.
- **Pendle Borough Council will...**
 - Ensure the customer experience is the same across all our channels.





Pendle Borough Council

Town Hall,
Market Street,
Nelson, Lancashire,
BB9 7LG

tel: 01282 661661
email: communications@pendle.gov.uk
www.pendle.gov.uk