

HOW TO WRITE MEDIATED CONTENT

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to:

- provide guidance on how to write mediated content
- provide examples on the 29 mediated content headings
- identify useful examples, and ensure the examples cover everything for mediated content.
- develop consistency in writing mediated content and share best practice amongst local authorities.

Audience

The initial audience for this document was the service owners of mediated content in London Borough of Tower Hamlets, who are localising the generic mediated content as part of the Customer Access Project.

The document is intended to:

- help service owners localise the generic content with useful examples
- help service owners familiarise them selves with the mediated content headings and structure
- guide service owners, when drafting and maintaining content for new services
- inform service owners of the mandatory headings

Credits

This document is based on the guidance drafted by my self and Tom Skelcher from the Knowledge Management National Project Workstream four.

Headings

* Mandatory headings

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Service description

Include a brief description of the service, what the service is about.

Example 1, 319 birth registration

"This service gives brief information on how to register a birth in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets"

Example 2

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) ranges from serious acts of violence and harassment to more everyday incidents and situations for example, noisy dogs or overgrows gardens.

ASB is classed as:

"Behaviour which causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more people not in the same household as the perpetrator."

Legislation

Name the regulations and acts that govern the service and ensure that the acts appear in bullet points, if more than one.

Example 434 Animal Welfare

- Environmental Protection Act 1990 (control of stray dogs).
- Road Traffic Act 1988 Sec 27 (dogs on leads on road)
- Control of Dogs order 1992 (collar and tag)
- Guard Dogs Act 1975
- EPA 1990 (barking dogs and other animal nuisance)
- Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996
- EPA 1990 (barking dogs and other animal nuisance)

Eligibility criteria

Remember to include who this service is aimed at and any requirements to qualify for the service e.g.

Example 23 Education maintenance

Applicants may apply for an EMA if:

- they are British, EEA or EU nationals and....
- they are aged between 16 and 19 years old,
- their parent's taxable income was less than £30,000 in the financial year preceding the start of the course

Evidence required

Mention any evidence that the applicant needs to provide for example,

- proof of state's benefit
- proof of residency
- proof of savings
- proof of income
- proof of age

Example 23 Education Maintenance Award

The following information will need to be provided by the applicants:

- recent bank evidence showing the applicants full name, address and bank account details

Pre-requisites

Mention anything that applicant needs to have prior to their application for example if a blind person is applying for a blue badge, they need to register with the sensory team prior to their application.

Exemptions

Provide details of any exemption that the service may have, for example a person living in a residential care home maybe exempts from paying council tax.

Example 59 Council Tax

The following may be exempt from paying Council Tax charges:

- living in a residential care homes, nursing homes, mental nursing homes
- a Member of a religious community
- a person who lives in a hostel for the homeless or a night shelter

Restriction

Mention any restriction the service may have, this could be a limit on payments or amounts.

Example 23 Education Maintenance Award

"Applicants will not qualify for EMA if they are receiving other Government funding, for example a Dance and Drama Award or a Training Allowance"

Application process

There are three parts to this process

1. Mention how to obtain the application form, example "Application forms can be obtained in the following way"
 - from the Council's website
 - from One Stop Shops
 - from Local Housing Offices
 - from the relevant department "Right to Buy section"
 - by calling the office
 - by emailing the office
 - by any other methods

2. Provide information on how the application for the service can be made. If the form needs to be posted or handed in person.

Example Home ownership right to buy

Applicants need to hand in the form at their local one stop shop/local housing office and obtain a receipt

3. Also mention anything else that the applicant needs to know that relates to the application for example.
 - Applicant will need to provide evidence within 28 days of the application
 - If applicant wish to complete the form and send it to the home ownership section, they should keep a copy of the form"
 - Also, if they post the form they should either use recorded delivery, or deliver it by hand and request a receipt

Form handling guidance notes

There are some example texts available for handling forms for example what the mediators should do when:

Providing the form to the customer

- Provide the customer with the form required if they wish to complete it.
- Inform them that they can complete it now, or take it away with them.
- Explain that the application will be dated from when the council receives the form.

Help in completing the form

- Explain that help can be provided in completing the form.
- If for any reason the customer cannot complete the form and requires assistance, you may help them complete it.
- But ensure that you record that you assisted the customer, and ensure that the customer signs the form, if a signature is required.

Checking the form

- Make sure that all of the required information has been recorded on the form
- Make sure the information is complete and legible, and in black ink if the form will need to be photocopied
- Make sure the form is signed and dated, and that the date shown is today's date.
- If the customer has recorded an earlier date on the form tell them that the application will be from the form was received. If there is a reason why the form should be dated before this date the customer should provide it in writing.

Handling supporting documents

- Make copies of all required documents. Make sure you copy all relevant pages. For passports ensure that you copy the pages with the customer's photograph, plus details of residency and any travelling dates.
- Stamp the copies to indicate that you have seen the original. Date and sign your stamp.
- If the customer provides copies of documents indicate that originals have not been seen.
- If there are documents required that the customer has not supplied receive the form and the copies of any other documents.
- If documents are missing advise the customer that they will need to supply the missing information. Note that the missing documents are to be supplied, and sign and date your note.

Issuing a receipt

- Issue the customer with a receipt indicating what form you have received.
- Record on the receipt details of any documents you have copied.
- Record any documents that are required but have not been supplied.
- Identify which department will receive the application.
- ensure that the name and address of the customer is showing on the receipt
- Record your name and the date.

Next steps

Setting expectations

There is example text here – to remind mediators to tell customers what happens after they hand in their application form.

Example text

Tell the customer what happens next and when they can expect to be contacted next by the council

Under the “next steps” provide information on what happens after an application is made.

- how long the application takes to process
- when and how the applicant will be informed

For examples:

- applicants will be informed within 14 days of receipt of the application
- applicants will be notified in writing
- applicants will be asked to make an appointment for further information
- home visits will be provided for those who qualify

Contact channels

There is example text here – to remind mediators to tell customers who to contact for further information or if they wish to contact someone from that section.

Example Text

Tell the customer who to contact in the department if they need to ask any questions

Name or team:

Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address

Send correspondence to:

Additional telephone number for staff use only

If there is more than one contact channel for example you need to name more than one department then make sure information is provided for the both department.

Application forms

Provide links to any application forms that are available online, this can be on the website, if they are not online then see if arrangements can be made to have them available.

Example Abandoned vehicles reporting form

<https://webforms.towerhamlets.gov.uk/AF3/an/default.aspx/RenderForm/?Name=KoJmibHNbeD>

Renewal procedure

Mention the renewal process, how the renewal will take place, whether the applicant will be sent a written reminder for example 8 weeks before their application expires or the applicant needs to contact the department near the time.

Include information on any evidence that customer may need to provide with their renewal.

Example 279 Disabled Blue Badge:

- A renewal application form will be sent to the badge holder at least two months before the badge expires
- The applicant must then follow the same procedure as for the initial application

Replacement

Provide information on the replacement process. For example what the applicant need to do to replacing a stolen blue badge, or replacing a lost, damaged permit.

Mention how long it will take to replace and if the applicant needs to provide any documents.

Example 280 disabled persons freedom pass

If the travel pass has been damaged, applicants should return the damaged pass to the Mobility Support Team with a covering letter stating the circumstances. In this instance, the pass must be cut in half before sending it to the team

Benefit or charges

This heading is in two parts:

1. Mention any benefit applicant is entitled to for example free travel passes, free birth certificate, school clothing grant, free scratch-cards for parking.
2. Also mention any charges the applicant will have to make, for example “full copy of birth certificate will cost– **£3.50** “

Example 114 Council Estates Parking

Part 1

Disabled badge holders receive the first bay free, unless they are already renting a garage at the discounted rate.

Example Part 2

Tower Hamlets estate parking bays currently cost **£1.35 per week** for council tenants/leaseholders and their partners

£1.59 per week for other LBTH residents
£4.11 per week for business users and staff

If tenant requires a permit change due to change of vehicle there will be an administration charge of **£5**

Benefit or payment method

Receiving payments

This heading also forms in two parts and is carried on from the above heading. There is also example text here – to remind mediators on what to do when taking payments.

Example text:

- Receive the fee.
- If it is a cheque or standing order make sure that it is correctly filled in and that the date is correct and that it has been signed.
- Issue a receipt for the fee, and record what the fee was payable for. Record the date and your signature.

Part 1

Part 1 focuses on methods of payments made to the applicants for example If the applicant is entitled to any benefit then mention how this will be paid, either in the applicants bank account or by cheque.

Example, School clothing grants

Grants of £77,00 will be issued as cheques made out to the parents/guardians of eligible pupils and posted to the applicant's home address

Part 2

This part focuses on methods of payments made by the customer. Here include information on different payment option available to the customers for the charges and how that can be made.

Example 114 council estate parking

For payments can be made by one of the following methods

- Automatic Telling Machines (ATM)
- By Post
- By Telephone
- Direct Debit
- In Person
- Online
- Post Office
- Telephone Banking Service

Remember to provide in details on each of the methods above with hyperlink. See example provided for Post Office and by post.

Post Office

Payments can be made at any Post Office with the rents/council tax payments slips.

By Post

Cheques or postal orders should be made payable to London Borough of Tower Hamlets and sent to:

Cashiers Office
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
255-279 Cambridge Heath Road
London E2 0HQ

Resources issued

Mention any resources issued for example temporary payment slips, parking permit or birth certificates.

Example, Hate Crime:

“The team will ensure that witnesses feel safe at their residence and can provide further safety steps by supplying a fireproof letterbox, a spy-hole camera and personal alarms”

Appeals process/Complaint process

Provide details on the appeals process, or complaint's process.

For example mention the following:

- if the applicant has the right of appeal
- how the appeal should be made, whether this should be in writing, by completing a form or in person.
- include information on what happens after an appeal is made.
- when and how the appellant will be notified
- remember to mention any conditions of appealing, how many days the appeal should be made.

Example, 3 home to school travel support:

If an application is refused, parents have the right of appeal. An appeal form with guidance notes is enclosed with all refusal letters and this must be completed and returned together with any supporting documentation.

Appeals must be made **within 21 days** of the date of the refusal letter and are normally decided **within 10 days** of being received by Pupil Services.

Disqualified/suspension/penalty/compensation

Mention anything that will disqualify, suspend or effect the customer's application.

Example, 279 Disabled blue badge

Tower Hamlets has a designated fraud team that will investigate any reported or suspected cases of badge abuse. Offenders are prosecuted where the evidence is sufficient to support such a course of action and the council always presses for the strongest penalties where a guilty verdict is obtained

Example, 114 Council estates parking

Estate parking bays are designated for individual use. If the car is not parked at the designated bay displaying a valid permit, the car is likely to get clamped or towed away. Permit holders will be liable for any costs incurred.

Violation of arrears

Write, what will happen if the tenant is in any form of arrears.

For example:

If the permit holder is in rental arrears, they will receive a notice to give up their parking bay

Alerts to Dept/mediators

Provide information on what actions can be taken by mediators if the customer is being abusive or violent.

For mediators to quote the individual borough policy, mention the policy. And also any section policy for example to transfer the caller to team the leader or reminder customers that if they continue to be abusive then the telephone call will be terminated or asked to leave the premises if in person.

Disability notes

Provide information on any disability notes that maybe relevant.

Example, Doorstep recycling:

Assisted collections can be made on request for elderly residents or those with a disability or health problem

Guidance notes

This heading is an extension to the service description.

Mention any further information on the service for example for recycling what items can be recycled.

Example, Babysitting service:

Babysitters are not registered and there are no regulations to govern this type of childcare, however both the NSPCC and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) recommend that babysitters should be over 16 years of age

Remember to attach any flow charts or process maps that are available for the service.

Home visits

Mention if home visits are provided for the service and what the criteria's are, for example does the applicant need to be elderly, unwell or disabled to qualify for home visits.

Service times

Provide the service opening hours and if any time should be avoided due to short staff for example lunch hours or peak time.

Example

Mobility and Support Team are open during the following hours:
Monday to Friday 9am–5pm.

There might be staff shortages during lunch time (12-2pm), therefore try not to refer applicants during this time.

Related services

Include any other relevant mediated services under this heading. These are services that are or could be connected to the service you are writing about.

Remember to provide the service title and the numbers (if available)also provide links to the services.

Example Birth Registration

317 Marriage arrangement and ceremony
321 Death registration
323 Birth historical searches
324 Death historical searches
698 Marriage historical searches

Further information

Links

Include any relevant Internal and external links but not the “self service” link (Tower Hamlets website “Self Service” content)

These could be links to any maps or websites where applicant/customers can access detailed information on the service.

For example education maintenance has its own website that you can provide link to www.ema.dfes.gov.uk

FAQs

Attach any frequently asked questions that has been identified

Glossary

Provide a list of words that customers or mediators may not understand for example,

- swipecard- explain what swipecard is for example, [swipecards is for making payments at the post office for rents or council tax....](#)
- non- dependant charge- explain what this means
- overpayment – explain what this is
- every service should have its own glossary

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