

Customer Types and Characteristics

The information below is designed to provide broad guidance regarding potential 'customer types' and 'characteristics' within Customer Service. It is in no way designed to be an exhaustive list.

There are two **main types** of customer:

- An **external** customer is from outside the organisation providing the product or service
- An **internal** customer is in the same organisation as the person who is providing a product or service to an external customer

Customers, whether external or internal, have a number of **characteristics** which may include the following:

1. Demographics
 - males/females/both
 - young school children/teenagers/young adults/middle aged/elderly
 - individuals/couples/groups/families with children
 - the local area/the wider city or town/urban/rural/others parts of the country/other parts of the world
 - other such as cultural/ethical/religious
2. Service access requirements
 - weekdays/weekends
 - seasonal/term time/holidays
 - before 9am/mornings/lunchtimes/afternoons/evenings
3. Travel mode
 - car/van
 - bus/train/tram/taxi
 - foot
 - bicycle/motorbike
4. Method of communication
 - face-to-face
 - in writing
 - on the telephone
 - via the internet/social networking
5. Behaviour and demeanour
 - demanding/undemanding
 - patient/impatient
 - confused/unsure
 - unfamiliar/familiar with the service/product
 - aggressive/assertive
 - specialist group

Knowledge of customer types and characteristics will allow learners to make a decision regarding the customer types and characteristics for the sector/job role that they have identified/work in. For example:

Healthcare in a doctor's surgery may incorporate: young children/elderly; mornings/afternoons; walk/car; individuals/families with children; face-to-face/on the telephone; demanding/impatient; local area

A local hairdressing salon may incorporate: females; young adults/middle aged/elderly; car/walk; individuals/face-to-face; undemanding; the local area

A call centre may incorporate: males; young adults/middle aged; all day; don't travel for their service; individuals; on the telephone/via the internet; demanding/impatient; other parts of the country/other parts of the world

A tourist information centre may incorporate: males/females/both; individuals/groups; others parts of the country; seasonal/holidays; mornings/afternoons; foot/tram; face-to-face; unfamiliar/confused

A builders merchant may incorporate: males; young adults/middle aged; individuals; the local area/urban; van; face-to-face; familiar with the service/product; specialist group.

These are all generalisations and will change depending on the sector job roles. Similar scenarios could be applied to any sectors/job roles – it is all about understanding who the main customers are and how they are likely to behave.

Once learners have identified this, it will be easier to identify what the main expectations of customers are eg fast service (supermarket); personal and caring service/one to one/privacy (hospital/doctors/dentist); efficient and quick service (financial services); slow service with specialist knowledge (travel agent).

Such identification would allow learners to look at their chosen organisation and identify whether expectations are usually met or when they are not.