



Customer service and aftercare

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Trauma can arise through a range of different circumstances and often involves multiple complex challenges and periods of instability. Customers may experience feelings of threat or pressure in certain situations, which may present in different ways, including anxiety, distrust, withdrawal, and communication difficulties. Recognising these responses is the first step toward enhancing financial and customer services to be more compassionate, accessible, and inclusive. Understanding the individual needs of customers and adjusting interactions accordingly can significantly improve the experience for both customers and staff.

Communication

A lack of transparency and inconsistency can lead to customers feeling frustrated and confused, potentially causing customers to disengage with businesses. Interactions with customers should be approached with empathy and understanding, which demonstrates active listening, and encourages conversation. Validation is important, this means acknowledging a person's emotions, thoughts, experiences and explanations. If staff are sincere, open minded and believe customers' accounts of their experiences, it can help to break down barriers and build trust.

Recording Information

Taking a trauma-informed approach to collecting customer data ensures that customers feel comfortable and empowered to share their information while also preventing the data collection and recording process from creating any additional barriers for customers who may need additional support. Ask people about their preferred methods of contact and ensure that consent is gained when recording personal information. Data protection standards should be followed, and only essential customer information should be collected. Clearly communicate the reasons for gathering this information, explain how it will be used, and reassure customers that their privacy will be protected. Accurately documenting support needs in internal systems, with consent, can support continuity of care, enable staff to be prepared for future interactions, and prevent customers from having to repeat their experiences.

Aftercare

When necessary, provide follow-up communication to ensure ongoing support and address any unresolved issues. It's important that services are sincere and carry out what they say they are going to do, as it will build trust, reduce anxiety and enable customers to feel more safe and secure about their interactions with a business.

Having a directory of local resources will help if you are not able to directly support a customer. Knowledge of local services will enable you to signpost customers and leave people feeling like they have been listened to, even if you are not able to help.

Allow time for staff to feedback and reflect on different situations and adjust services based on insights to better serve customers who have experienced trauma and homelessness.

Staff and culture

The level of understanding that staff have about homelessness, their beliefs and unconscious bias will influence how they interact and respond to customers.

Unwelcoming or dismissive behaviour from staff can potentially retraumatise customers, escalate situations, and reinforce distrust.

Staff should be encouraged to reflect on their biases, how they interact with customers and manage their own feelings. Regular training, open conversations, and opportunities for staff to share experiences and feedback will create a positive, trauma-informed workplace. Mechanisms should also be in place to enable staff to seek support in navigating challenging interactions.

Creating a supportive, inclusive, and respectful organisational culture is essential to effectively supporting customers who have experienced trauma and homelessness. Leadership should model empathy, prioritise staff wellbeing, and ensure that compassionate, person-centred services are a core value.

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