

**Bath and North East Somerset**

**Registration Service**

**Customer Engagement Strategy**

**April 2017**





Here to mark the important events in your life.

**Introduction and Background.**

Civil registration is a vital and important service that affects everyone at some point in their lives. It provides the first registration of all citizens, evidence of identity and name, registrations of a death and the Tell Us Once service. It delivers and registers ceremonies for marriage and civil partnership, welcomes a child at a naming ceremony and celebrates renewal of vows ceremonies. The service produces copy certificates and is available to provide the necessary advice and help in all registration matters.

The Service is a valued and important part of the Home Office and it underpins and supports the Home Office’s priorities of protection of terrorism, reducing crime, tackling immigration abuse, public protection and counter fraud. It is essential therefore that the local Registration Service continues to deliver a service of excellence for its customers, recording information accurately and timely and in line with the statutory responsibilities placed on the service, the registration law and regulations and the policies set by the Registrar General.

The statistical information derived from civil registration contributes to Government policy making and legislation and provides local information needed for the future provision of wider services such as education and health care.

The Bath and North East Somerset Registration service is committed to providing a Service of Excellence. We need to be efficient, effective and equitable, with the customer at the heart of everything we do. This is reflected in the facilities provided within the Registration Service itself, as well as the wider resources and support services of Bath and North East Somerset Council, and the skill, knowledge and dedication of all our staff.

To maintain service success it is vital to understand the needs of the customers as well as their views on our services and provision. We support a customer-focused approach throughout the service and provide accurate, detailed and timely information in a variety of accessible ways. Regular dialogue and communication with our partners and stakeholders ensures joined-up service provision as part of our day-to-day business.

We aim to offer opportunities for all our customers to actively engage in the delivery of services and shaping future provision. Bath and North East Somerset Registration Service attends both local and national user groups, taking a central part in the development and direction of the Registration Service nationally.

We submit Annual Performance Reviews to the Registrar General assuring adherence to the Code of Practice, Key Performance Indicators and Targets and Statutory and Operations Service delivery Standards. We evidence service performance against the Public Protection and Counter Fraud guidance and provide the Service Delivery Plans and Business Continuity Plans each year.

The Bath and North East Somerset Customer Engagement Strategy outlines the values and framework for providing customer service excellence throughout the service.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the Bath and North East Somerset Registration Service:

* To put the customer at the heart of everything we do.
* To listen and engage with our customers and be responsive to their needs and identifying issues which directly affect them.
* To seek continuous improvement to deliver a customer focussed service and use customer feedback to drive forward service improvement.
* To train, develop and support staff, cultivating enthusiasm and commitment and recognising achievement.
* To work to provide a service of excellence that meets customer needs and to provide the correct and timely information that is accessible for all our customers.
* To work with others to improve the quality of service provision and give Best Value at all times.

To achieve our objectives Bath and North East Somerset Registration Service is committed to the following initiatives:

* To ensure the service is delivered and developed in accordance with customer needs by focussing on continuous customer consultation.
* To use customer feedback to drive forward service improvements.
* To work with our directorate, government and council departments, and wider partners to provide seamless service provision across all services.
* To continually asses the quality and range of information available to our customers.
* To use the Registration Good Practice Guide and General Register Office Key Performance Targets to monitor and evaluate the Service, identify areas for improvement and celebrate success.
* To value and develop highly skilled and valued officers who are empowered to deliver our goals.
* To develop strong working relationships with Government and council departments, local Registration Services and our wider partners.
* To meet our Statutory, regulatory and contractual requirements and duties and to comply with legislation, relevant guidance and codes of practice.

3. Customer Engagement Strategy

The Bath and North East Somerset Registration Service is committed to deliver a service of excellence that meets and wherever possible exceeds the national standards in all areas. The Registration Service is part of the Council’s Customer Service Directorate which is proud to hold the Customer Service Excellence Standard – the government standard set by Cabinet Office.. The Registration Service has contributed to the 5 measured criterions required to meet this Standard, which is renewed annually. These criterions are; customer insight, organisation culture, information and access, delivery standards and outcomes, and timeliness and quality of service.

Alongside this, The Registration Service has its own continuous programme of improving provision by monitoring and evaluating service delivery to reflect the needs of the customer and using customer feedback to influence key policies, strategies and service standards.

Customer Engagement helps us to:

* Engage with the Customer by developing an in-depth understanding of our customer, and gain customer insight.
* Provide Service Accessibility by making the information about our full range of services we provide available to our customers and potential customers including how and when customers can contact us.
* Maintain an organisational development culture that supports a customer focused approach throughout the service so that an excellent service is delivered to all customers, and training, developing and supporting our dedicated staff to deliver excellence.
* Improve the service provision and improve the standards of the service across all areas by looking at the experience and outcomes for the customer, how we deliver our services, and how we manage any issues that may arise
* Provide continuous improvement by ensuring we set appropriate and measurable standards for the timeliness of response.
* Handle any issues arising in a timely and effective way in line with corporate and service policy.

4. Engagement with the Customer.

We regularly review our strategies and opportunities for consulting and engaging with customers to ensure that the methods used are effective and provide reliable and representative results.

Who are the Registration Service customers?

Our customers include:

* Members of the public for statutory and non-statutory registration services provided locally, regionally and nationally;
* Bath and North East Somerset Council and other Local Authorities;
* The General Register Office – GRO;
* The Home Office;
* The Coroners Service
* Central Government Departments;
* Office for National Statistics;
* Hospitals, Nursing and Care Homes;
* General Medical Practitioners and surgeries;
* Bereavement Service;
* Funeral Directors;
* Clergy of the Church of England and Religious Ministers and members of other Religious Denominations;
* The Approved Venues for marriages and civil partnership.

How can Customers get involved?

We ensure that our customers have several avenues to give us their comments, suggestions and feedback.

Customers can:

* Respond to Registration Service or Council email and postal surveys and feedback requests ;
* Discuss issues in person at the Register Office or by telephone;
* Make suggestions, compliments or comments and give feedback through our website;
* Send in comments and thank-yous by post or email;
* Attend consultation events or public meetings
* Contact Counsellors directly;
* Use our complaints and feedback procedure;
* Complete a comments card.

Responding to the Customer

It is essential that we listen to, recognise and respond to customer suggestions, comments and feedback and that we analyse satisfaction levels resulting in an improved service.

The Registration Service:

* Provides an immediate acknowledgement to individual customer comments, suggestions and feedback within 24 hours, followed by a full response ;
* Are available to talk with customer directly if they wish to raise an issue or concern;
* Acknowledges and celebrates compliments and thank yous at both service and corporate level;
* Reviews and analyses trends in customer feedback for use when planning changes to the service delivery;
* Is responsive to customer demand both in times of increased demand and in customer choice of service access location;
* Assesses and records customer satisfaction within the customer service directorate policy using the ‘Five Drivers of Satisfaction’ model;
* Develops staff training and development workshops that are customer focus led;
* Provides customer service courses for staff to attend and provide staff briefing sessions and one-to-one training as appropriate;
* Encourages and celebrates customer service excellence.

5. Service Accessibility

The Bath and North East Somerset Registration Service meets or exceeds the statutory requirements placed upon it. In 2016 the Service completed a thorough review of its service provision when all aspects of customer delivery were reviewed following consultation and customer input.

* The delivery of the Service and the appointment accessibility is monitored and evaluated to ensure the needs of the customer are met.
* The Service is developing online systems to provide wider access, and we work with the Council front line service of Council Connect to increased telephone access to the customer.
* A ceremonies brochure in 2017 allows customers to understand the range of ceremonies available and to provide further access to information.
* We have built strong working relationships with our stakeholders and wider partners. We meet regularly with local Registration Service Managers to address all issues, discuss best practice and ensure service provision is complimentary across boarding Local Authorities.
* We adapt our service provision to champion diversity and meet the changing demographics.
* We participate the South West and National users groups for Registration influencing the shaping of future services and initiatives.

6. Organisational Culture

The Registration Service empowers and encourages all staff to actively promote and participate in the customer focussed culture of Bath and North East Somerset Council. Our staff are polite friendly and responsive to customers and have an understanding of customer needs.

To achieve this we:

* Have robust and clear job specifications and recruitment procedures.
* Have a competencies framework for staff at all levels, including common ‘core competencies’ that unite all staff in our organisational values and behaviours
* Are committed to training and have an individual training audits for all staff that highlights training needed and records training received.
* Meet with neighbouring, regional and national groups to develop the service and share and support best practice.
* Invest in our staff and encourage them to attend training courses provide by the Council and partners that compliment registration technical training to expand staff knowledge and skills.
* Recognise and value the contributions of staff and the team at team meetings and through corporate awards.

7. Maintaining Provision and Providing Continuous Improvement.

It is vital that we provide a service of excellence. To do this we monitor and meet the key targets required, meet the customer service standards and performance targets and that we evaluate the outcomes for the customer.

To achieve this we:

* Evaluate how the customer interacts with the service through access channels and we use this information to evaluate and develop the service
* Consult and involve customers, citizens, partners and stakeholders in reviewing local standards
* Benchmark performance against key performance targets set by GRO and the Council and respond to any changes or trends.
* Publish customer satisfaction levels, performance indicators and service standards met.
* Be accountable to those we serve.
* Validate the results of service performance by regular meetings with the Proper Officer and in the Customer Service Excellence Award achieved by Customer Service Directorate.
* Use the performance and customer outcomes to develop and improve service provision forming action plans for the service and producing training and development plans.

8. Handling Issues that may arise.

Bath and North East Somerset follows a robust policy for handling complaints and the Registration Service fully accords with its principles. Complaints are responded to directly from the Service, where the relevant knowledge and expertise rests to quickly put the matter right or give an explanation to the customer. There are escalation processes for independent review. Records are kept, an audit trail in place and trends analysed. Appropriate action is planned and taken, ensuring timely and effective communications with complaints.

Specialised training is provided to our dedicated Customer Feedback Officer and regular refresher training is given to staff.