

**Bath and North East Somerset**

**Registration Service**

**Customer Engagement Strategy 2019**





Updated October 2019

**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 against 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.

**Our 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.

**Our 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 engages with the new Council priorities, values and behaviours.

The priorities:

* Protecting and caring for our most vulnerable.
* Nurturing residents’ health, safety and wellbeing.
* Providing ways for everyone in the community to reach their full potential.

The Council’s Values and Behaviours:

* Accountable – taking responsibility for our actions.
* Caring –doing our best for each other and other people in the community.
* Collaborative – working together to create efficient and sustainable solutions.
* Curious- asking questions, listening to understand and improving.
* Integrity- being transparent and building trusting relationships.
* Outcome driver – creating solution and delivering.

The Registration Service Manager and Registration Team Leaders are part of the Councils ‘Leading Together’ initiative that regularly meets to ensure these priorities are embedded throughout the Council and embraced as part of the Council culture.

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:

1. Engage with the Customer by developing an in-depth understanding of our customer, and gain customer insight.
2. 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.
3. Ensure Customer Service Satisfaction Level by maintaining 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.
4. Provide continuous Service improvement by ensuring we set appropriate and measurable standards for the timeliness of response. We 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
5. Handle any issues arising in a timely and effective way in line with corporate and service policy.

1. 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 and social media accounts;
* Send in comments and thank-yous by post or email;
* Attend consultation events or public meetings
* Contact Councillors 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;
* Monitors, reviews and analyses trends in customer experience for use when planning changes to the service delivery;
* Is responsive to customer demand both in times of increased and decrease in demand, and to customer choice of service access location;
* Assesses and records customer satisfaction within the Council policy;
* Develops staff training and development workshops that are customer focus led;
* Provides directed staff training courses to ensure continuous improvement;
* Provides customer service courses for staff and provide staff briefing sessions and one-to-one training as appropriate;
* Encourages and celebrates customer service excellence.

2. Service Accessibility

The Bath and North East Somerset Registration Service meets or exceeds the statutory requirements placed upon it.

In 2018-2019 the Service completed a review of its service provision.

The Service continually monitors and evaluates all aspects of customer delivery:-

* The delivery of the Service and the appointment accessibility is monitored and evaluated to ensure the needs of the customer are met. As seasonal trends and customer choice is identified, the Service is flexible both in provision and staffing so that we can immediately respond to changes in customer demand.
* The Service continues to develop online systems to provide wider access, and we work with the Council front line service of Council Connect to provide increased telephone access to the customer.
* A ceremonies brochure in 2019 allows customers to understand the range of ceremonies available and to provide further access to information. This is available online and as a hard copy from all our delivery points and related stakeholders.
* 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 neighbouring Local Authorities. We meet with the hospital service managers to ensure a seamless customer experience for births and death registrations.
* 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.

3. Customer Service Satisfaction level and Service 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. We measure, evaluate and respond all customer feedback and monitor delivery to ensure we can respond to customer needs efficiently and effectively.

Our staff are polite, friendly and responsive to customers and have an understanding of customer needs.

To achieve this we:

* Survey customers at least twice a year and respond to the outcomes.
* Are responsive and evaluate customer experience - face-to face, or via email, post, telephone or social media, embracing diversity and valuing everyone’s contribution.
* Are responsive and evaluate our partner and stakeholders experience.
* Forward plan to ensure increased seasonality provision for customers.
* Recognise and value the contributions of customer’s ideas and suggestions.
* Are committed to the Councils priorities and the values and behaviours to ensure our culture is open, owns decisions and is resilient. The culture is that we trust each other to act in the best interest of the residents, customers and colleagues.
* Use evidence to make informed decision to find effective solutions.
* Are committed to training and have individual training audits for all staff that highlights training needed and records training received.
* Have robust and clear job specifications and recruitment procedures.
* Have a competencies framework for staff at all levels, including the core organisational values and behaviours.
* 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 at least 3 external 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.

4. Providing Continuous Service 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:

* Learn from everything we do and apply that learning to continually make improvements.
* 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.
* Are resourceful and efficient by reviewing our processes. Removing duplication and making digital preferences where possible.
* 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.
* Are accountable to and care for those we serve.
* Validate the results of service performance by regular meetings with the Proper Officer and fulfilling customer service excellence required by the Council vales and behaviours.
* Use the performance and customer outcomes to develop and improve service provision forming action plans for the service and producing training and development plans.

5. 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 customers.

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