



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE
CONTINUOUS COMPLIANCE REPORT

Client: City of York Council, Environmental Health,
Trading Standards, Licensing and Bereavement Services

Project No:
10/0337

Assessor:

Nigel Hunt

Location:

De Grey House,
York

Date:

15th June 2010

Assessor's findings

▪ Front line service delivery

The City of York Council, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Licensing and Bereavement Services have continued to develop and improve their services. They have sought feedback from residents within the City of York about their priorities gaining additional insight into what residents want from services. They have developed and improved their consultation and satisfaction levels have improved. There has been a focus on mapping that has helped to improve customer journeys leading to improved satisfaction levels.

There continues to be excellent leadership in terms of commitment to delivering a customer focused service with embedded recognition of the benefits for customers and staff of delivering customer focused services. The Services have also improved information about aspects of service delivery, for example, within the Bereavement Service.

▪ Levels of complaints and satisfaction with the service.

There continue to be high levels of customer satisfaction in most areas, and where there are relatively lower areas of satisfaction there have been noticeable improvements over the last twelve months. There are few formal complaints.

▪ Progress made by the Customer Service Excellence holder in respect of partial compliances or areas for improvement which were identified during the previous assessment.

Staff have worked to ensure that important aspects such as customer journey mapping have become embedded. Within the context of organisational change that has been a positive achievement. There are still two partial compliances which have yet to be

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resolved, but there has also been the inclusion of an additional area of Compliance Plus.

- Issues which may affect certification.

There are no issues that affect Certification. It is understood that the Register Service is working towards CSE accreditation and it is possible that it might at this stage wish to be incorporated into subsequent applications. The City of York Council has been undergoing considerable organisational change. The final impact of that is not yet known, but might affect services within the wider Directorate.

Criterion 1 – Customer Insight

Across all services there continues to be an excellent understanding of the needs of customers. This understanding is through a detailed data base, use of the National Intelligence Model, and risk mapping. The core business segmentation remains the same. Over the last twelve months this information has been updated and augmented through a major survey of residents within York. A number of questions about the services including information about customer priorities and why they may not use the services has added to the customer insight. One of the outcomes, for example, was that customers would wish the Services to target those organisations which continued to ignore trading standards. Services also continued to gain insight from feedback from businesses through the 2009 Business Survey. There continues to be a focus on the hard to reach through the work of various staff for example, the Environmental Pollution Team's weekend night service aimed at noise polluters.

Consultation continues to be within the corporate policies and procedures which focus on corporate consultation and engagement to minimise the number of surveys carried out. It was within this context that the Services' feedback was sought through the Council's Talkabout corporate consultation. Alongside this, staff continue to seek feedback through the annual Business Survey, and again, this is in line with Government guidance that businesses should be surveyed no more than annually.

There has been a change, however, in that surveys are now sent to all businesses rather than on a sample basis. This has helped to improve the reliability and accuracy of feedback as a much higher percentage have been returned. This has had a noticeable impact on satisfaction levels for the smaller services, where satisfaction rates were distorted by the low sample size previously recommended. In addition, the Licensing Service sends satisfaction surveys to all new licensees or permits granted. They have also continued to have regular meetings with the Hackney Carriage licensees and Private Hire Vehicle Association. Services continue to develop in the light of feedback from customers.

The move to 100% surveys represents a change that has had a positive impact on levels of feedback. Staff have also introduced a telephone call into the process to help achieve that higher level of response. The Licensing Service still has a relatively lower level of response to the new surveys and might wish to consider other methodologies, perhaps making use of telephone surveys. Alongside these changes, staff continue with statutory consultation, for example, in relation to the establishment of Cold Calling Zones.

As indicated above, Services have changed the sampling for feedback questionnaires, now sending surveys to all services where there has been an intervention. This has resulted in a much higher response rate. The Talkabout Survey also achieved a

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statistically reliable response of just under 60%. This has had a noticeable impact on satisfaction levels for some of the smaller services. Overall customer satisfaction levels are high and in many cases over 90%. Satisfaction with the Licensing Service is 98%, with Food Safety 92% and Trading Standards 83%, whilst for Animal Health satisfaction levels have risen to 90% from 53%, and Health and Safety to 76% from 57%. In some cases, satisfaction levels reflect dissatisfaction with the outcome of regulatory action, but given that feedback in some services reflects that satisfaction levels are very good. Questionnaires continue to seek feedback about key drivers of customer satisfaction.

At the previous Assessment staff had carried out initial customer journey mapping. At the most recent Review, it was evident that this was now well embedded within the ethos of the Service. Discussions with staff highlighted their enthusiasm for customer journey mapping and indicated the value of mapping in raising satisfaction levels as changes had been made to improve the service. There were some excellent examples from across all services, but particularly in Animal Health and dealing with stray dogs and dog fouling. This area is regarded as compliance plus, because it is now clearly embedded within Service Plans, because of staff's enthusiasm, and because of the impact it has had on service areas outside the scope of the assessment.

Partial Compliance

There are no partial compliances.

Areas for Continuous Development

No areas for Continuous Development have been identified.

Compliance Plus

The embedding of customer journey mapping into Service Plans and promotion of the benefits of mapping to other services within the Council represents compliance plus (1.3.5).

Strengths

- There is a comprehensive database that informs customer segmentation and risk analysis that helps to identify and determine customer segmentation in some areas of service delivery.
- There is a high level of awareness of the needs not only of individual customers, but also the needs of businesses. The Environmental Health and Trading Standards Services regularly seek feedback from the wider public asking them what their priorities are and survey the business community as to their needs.
- Customer journey mapping is embedded within Service Plans across the Services.
- Staff are highly enthusiastic about the benefits of customer journey mapping and promoting it across the authority.
- Response levels to satisfaction surveys have increased and raised the reliability of the surveys.

Criterion 2 – The Culture of the Organisation

There continues to be a corporate commitment to putting the customer first and this is clearly set out within the Council's corporate strategy. This commitment continues to be particularly well developed across the Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Licensing and Bereavement Services, with managers very aware of customers' needs and actively advocating for customers. The corporate Leadership and Management Standards (LAMS) contain a measurable commitment to delivering a customer focussed service. There is also a requirement for service plans to be customer focused.

Staff continue to develop an insight into the needs of their customers. The last twelve months has seen a focus on the development of customer journey mapping that have been used to better understand the needs of customers. Staff are developing single inspections in food safety and hygiene and collect information on other licensing and regulatory areas to help minimise the impact of regulation on businesses and operate within a risk management framework. Evidence was available of a similar approach in animal health and farms. The Talkabout survey sought to identify customer's priorities to gain insight into what they considered to be important. Similarly, it sought to ascertain the reasons why potential customers do not use their services, for example, trading standards, and to identify potential barriers to accessing services.

Staff continue to seek feedback about whether customers consider they have been treated fairly. In most areas this is above 90%, but in some areas is lower. Where that is the case it is difficult to determine whether that is because the outcome was not as expected. Where there are lower than average percentages over a period staff may wish to carry out further reviews of those areas. The Licensing Service has been particularly active in promoting NVQs for taxi drivers and also working with taxi drivers who have wheelchair accessible vehicles to train them in good practice. All staff continue to be actively engaged in promoting a customer focused culture. At the most recent staff 'Away Day' all staff were actively engaged in customer journey mapping different aspects of various services.

The LAMS framework continues to set the tone with its emphasis on customer focus and staff work within this competency framework for recruitment, training and development and the appraisal process. The focus on customers is clear and staff and managers continue to be reviewed against customer focused competencies appropriate to their level of responsibility. Discussions with staff continued to indicate the opportunities they have to develop services and their expertise, insight and experience are clearly valued through the customer journey mapping processes. Managers positively promote customer focus and recognise staff's achievements both verbally, through minuted meetings and email and through the display of external awards and achievements.

Partial Compliance

There are no partial compliances.

Areas for Continuous Development

No areas for Continuous Development have been identified.

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Strengths

- Staff have used a number of ways to gather insight about customers needs are using these to develop policy and inform operational delivery.
- Staff work within an open, customer focused culture that stems from leaders within the Services, and which builds on the experience of front line staff.
- The use of customer journey mapping has provided excellent insight into services and has had a clear impact of how some services have been delivered.
- The corporate Leadership and Management Standards have a clear focus on customer service and their principles form an underlying basis of appraisals for employees.
- Staff within the Licensing Service have actively worked with Hackney Carriage and Private Hire license holders to develop customer service training and accreditation particularly in relation to support for wheelchair users.
- Staff are clearly empowered to deliver customer focused services and are involved in identifying not only areas for improvement but also developing new ideas about how services and activities can be taken forward;

Criterion 3 – Information & Access

Information continues to be readily available through a wide range of sources about the services that are available. These continue to set out how services can be contacted, for example, accessibility to the out of hours Noise Patrol Service at weekends. Where there are costs these continue to be clearly set out.

The quality of the written information continues to be high focusing clearly on issues that have been identified, legal requirements, best practice and actions that can be taken. Where no action can be taken the reasons are clearly set out. Leaflets and the web site have language panels and there are some specific language leaflets. The Services continue to develop information. For example, improvements to trading standards letters, providing improved scripts for contact centre staff on the front line so they have a better understanding of issues and actions when speaking to customers, and providing training to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers to they better understand issues around disability and wheelchair users' needs. There are other examples, such as the new leaflets produced by the Bereavement Service and guidance leaflet on new rights to cancel certain types of contract.

There have been no changes to the channels through which customers contact staff and interact with services. However, the introduction of the 'Scores on the Doors' web site in relation to food hygiene has had a large impact on the use of the web site with 145,000 searches since it was set up a year ago. The premises remain the same with personal callers visiting St Leonard's House which is comfortable and clean. Much of the contact with the public is through visiting premises.

Staff continue to work closely in partnership with other areas of the City of York Council particularly through the Safer York partnership and also with Consumer Direct. Staff

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network with other authorities in Yorkshire and work in partnership and liaison with them across a number of areas. Staff play an active part in the Capable Guardian process within York in helping to reduce anti-social behaviour caused by noise nuisance and are working in the wider community with the Council's sports team to tackle obesity and as part of the Yorkshire & Humber Scambusters team to tackle rogue traders.

Partial Compliance

Whilst the Service has some information and awareness about the use of different access routes, for example, the use of the 'Scores on the Doors' web site, there is still limited evaluation of how customers interact through access channels (3.3.2).

Areas for Continuous Development

There is scope to take a more structured view of the access channels and how customers interact with the organisation (3.3.2).

Compliance Plus

The use of correspondence templates ensures that customers are advised of officers' understanding of the issues raised, the legal position, best practice and the next steps where appropriate and how staff will keep them informed (3.2.4).

Overall, services are involved in excellent partnership working, but, in particular the co-location of the Police Licensing Officer and the Council Licensing staff ensures a high degree of co-ordinated working, sharing of intelligence, whilst retaining clear lines of responsibility and accountability (3.4.2).

Strengths

- The quality of information produced is high.
- The quality of written information is also good.
- The service uses standard pro-forma that set out the issues that have been identified, the legal issues and requirements and what might be regarded as best practice and ensures a consistency of approach.
- The use of the 'Scores on the Doors' web site which provides current information on the food hygiene status of premises within the City of York is extremely popular with the public.
- There is good partnership working in place with other internal services and external agencies and authorities that clearly benefit customers.
- Services are responsive to the wider needs of the community for example, the development of the Cold Calling Zones and the development of campaigns and awareness raising over a range of issues.

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Criterion 4 – Delivery

Services continue to work to National Indicators where they continue to be applicable, but the number of Indicators have been reduced in relation to some of the services delivered. The Services continue to have their own local standards for service delivery, for example, the percentage target for dealing with requests which is well above the Council's target for responsiveness. There continue to be robust monitoring systems in place. Feedback from the recent Talkabout consultation indicated that potential customers were satisfied with the standards. A new standard has been introduced relating to the percentage of businesses with three or more complaints and actions taken.

Customer service standards continue to be readily available and where action is taken staff agree with customers the approach and actions to be taken. Performance monitoring indicates that service delivery is good. Feedback from recent food inspections indicates that the average score in the 'Scores on the Doors' web site have improved by 20%. Staff continue to benchmark and learn from others where appropriate and also to promote their own good practice and have been shortlisted for awards.

Complaints are dealt with speedily and within timescales. There is a very objective approach to responding to them. It continues to be of great credit to the Services and the way that front line staff deliver services that, operating within a regulatory framework, there are few complaints. There is a very good recording process for complaints and any lessons learned are reported back across the services. Feedback is sought to help ensure that the outcome of complaints is satisfactory for customers.

Partial Compliance

There are no partial compliances.

Areas for Continuous Development

No areas of Continuous Development have been identified.

Strengths

- The Services are enthusiastic about learning from benchmarking. It is committed to taking the lead in learning from, developing and taking forward best practice.
- The Services perform well in relation to their standards and targets
- The Service seeks feedback from the wider public on its Standards.
- There is a robust risk assessment and performance monitoring framework.
- The published annual report sets out clearly how well the individual Services are delivering.

Criterion 5 – Timeliness & Quality of Service

The Services continue to have standards in relation to timeliness and quality of service.

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Feedback through the Talkabout survey indices general satisfaction with response times. Response times for dealing with requests is higher than that for the City Council. Standards continue to be well publicised and brought to the attention of individuals during discussion with them. Customer Journey Mapping has identified some areas where customers might not be dealt with at the most appropriate point of contact, for example, in reporting of dog fouling and stray dogs, but these have been rectified. The FLARE database helps to ensure there is sharing of information. The development of inspections that take a wider perspective of other regulatory issues demonstrates an appropriate sharing of information. The timeliness of service delivery is monitored as is the quality of delivery. Information about performance is available through the web site and in the reception area. Standards are clearly met.

Partial Compliance

Whilst the Services overall are positive about benchmarking, there continues to be only limited evidence about benchmarking on performance in relation to timeliness and the quality of service (5.3.3).

Areas for Continuous Development

The Service may wish to develop benchmarking in relation to its performance against standards in relation to timeliness and the quality of service as well as service delivery (5.3.3).

Compliance Plus

The use of correspondence templates ensures that customers are advised, not only of what is happening, but also the timescales for any subsequent action that may be appropriate (5.2.4).

Strengths

- Standards for timeliness of responses are higher than for the other Council services.
- Regulatory staff undertake multi-discipline inspections helping to ensure reduced unnecessary contact.
- There are high levels of performance in relation to working within response times.

Outcome

Following this visit I am able to inform you of my decision that the City of York Council, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Licensing and Bereavement Services continue to meet the Customer Service Excellence Standard. I can confirm the 2nd year annual surveillance check will be carried out twelve months from the date of this visit in June 2011.

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Compliance against the Charter Mark Standard

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Compliance Plus	Compliant	Partial Compliance	Non Compliance	
1	1.1	1.1.1		X			
		1.1.2		X			
		1.1.3		X			
	1.2	1.2.1			X		
		1.2.2			X		
		1.2.3			X		
	1.3	1.3.1			X		
		1.3.2			X		
		1.3.3			X		
		1.3.4			X		
			1.3.5	X			

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Compliance Plus	Compliant	Partial Compliance	Non Compliance	
2	2.1	2.1.1		X			
		2.1.2		X			
		2.1.3		X			
		2.1.4		X			
		2.1.5		X			
		2.1.6		X			
	2.2	2.2.1			X		
		2.2.2			X		
		2.2.3			X		
		2.2.4			X		
		2.2.5			X		

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Compliance Plus	Compliant	Partial Compliance	Non Compliance	
3	3.1	3.1.1		X			
		3.1.2		X			
	3.2	3.2.1			X		
		3.2.2			X		
		3.2.3			X		
			3.2.4	X			
	3.3	3.3.1			X		
		3.3.2				X	
			3.3.3		X		
	3.4	3.4.1			X		
		3.4.2		X			
		3.4.3		X			

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Compliance Plus	Compliant	Partial Compliance	Non Compliance	
4	4.1	4.1.1		X			
		4.1.2		X			
		4.1.3		X			
	4.2	4.2.1			X		
		4.2.2			X		

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		4.2.3		X		
		4.2.4		X		
	4.3	4.3.1		X		
		4.3.2		X		
		4.3.3		X		
		4.3.4		X		
		4.3.5		X		
		4.3.6		X		

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Compliance Plus	Compliant	Partial Compliance	Non Compliance
5	5.1	5.1.1		X		
		5.1.2		X		
	5.2	5.2.1		X		
		5.2.2		X		
		5.2.3		X		
		5.2.4	X			
		5.2.5		X		
	5.3.	5.3.1		X		
		5.3.2		X		
		5.3.3			X	