

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE22 April 2021Report by Director of EducationCUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE AWARD**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise committee of the outcome of the most recent Customer Service Excellence assessment of the Education Department.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. The recommendation is that Elected Members:
- a. note the continuing high standard of this award in recognition of the department's high quality services; and,
  - b. approve this approach to ensuring the department's sustained commitment to continuous improvement.

**BACKGROUND**

3. The Customer Service Excellence standard '*tests in great depth those areas that research has indicated are a priority for customers, with particular focus on delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude. There is also emphasis placed on developing customer insight, understanding the user's experience and robust measurement of service satisfaction.*'

4. The previous review for the Education Department took place in November 2019 and assessment is undertaken on an annual basis.

**REPORT**

5. In light of current restrictions the assessor undertook the review online. The assessment involved reviewing a range of documentary evidence as well as reviewing practice and interviewing staff, partners and customers. The assessment was undertaken in two stages:

- a) The first stage was a review of self-assessment evidence presented by the department, which enabled the assessor to gain an understanding of how East Renfrewshire Council's Education Department meets the requirements of the Customer Service Excellence standard.
- b) The second stage was to review the actual service delivered in establishments by examining a 'customer journey'; this was focused on approaches to

providing continuity of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic across schools and services including ELC, primary, secondary, and adult learning. This part of the review involved learners and staff from Carolside Primary School and Barrhead High School in a discussion of their experiences of remote learning; a range of partners and staff in discussion of coordinated and partnership support for vulnerable learners; and a discussion with learners and parents from St Luke's High School, St Ninian's High School, and Eastwood High School communities about learning through vocational programmes.

6. The outcome of the review was the continued award of the Customer Service Excellence Standard. The assessment report, included in Appendix 1 of this paper, noted:

*'You have very high levels of customer satisfaction and these continue to improve over time.'*

*"There are many and varied strategies in place to engage with customers to determine their views on service provision and ensure that high levels of customer insight are maintained"*

*'The commitment to customer focus comes from the senior leadership of the organisation and has become embedded within your service in meaningful ways.'*

7. The report recognises the department's continuing commitment to providing excellent services and to seeking continuous improvement. It identified 31 areas of 'Compliance Plus', *'behaviours or practices which exceed the requirements of the standard and are viewed as exceptional or as an exemplar to others.'* The number of areas of compliance plus had previously increased over the course of annual assessments from ten in 2015, to 26 in 2019.

8. These areas are set out in the report and included:

- very high levels of customer insight used effectively to prioritise resources and needs;
- an ethos of consultation being integral to continuous improvement, including during changes made at pace in response to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- staff being empowered to act in a person-centred and customer-focused way;
- information being provided and delivered in ways that meet the needs and preferences of customers; and
- monitoring and meeting performance standards and sharing this with customers.

9. The report identifies one area for improvement in relation to communication between the Education Department, other providers of education such as Colleges, and young people. This will be taken forward by the vocational learning team. The assessor noted that where pupils and parents raised ideas for improvement, staff were keen to listen and accept possible areas for improvement and to take ownership of these. The Education Department will continue to focus on supporting staff and schools to provide the highest quality customer focused service delivery.

## **FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS**

10. Costs for the annual assessment are met within the Education Department's revenue budget.

## CONCLUSION

11. The assessment report and the confirmation of the continued achievement of the Customer Service Excellence standard recognise the Education Department's sustained commitment to continuous improvement and delivering services of the highest quality. .

## RECOMMENDATION

12. The recommendation is that Elected Members:
- a. note the continuing high standard of this award in recognition of the department's high quality services; and,
  - b. approve this approach to ensuring the department's sustained commitment to continuous improvement.

Mark Ratter  
Director of Education  
22 April 2021

### Convener Contact Details

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### Appendix

Appendix 1      Customer Service Excellence Report - East Renfrewshire Council – Education Department

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# Assessment Report

## CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

East Renfrewshire Council - Education Department  
2 SURVEILLANCE



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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The assessment method used was a full remote assessment due to the current circumstances of the Covid19 Pandemic.

Following the assessment, East Renfrewshire Council - Education Department was found to have a deep understanding of, and commitment to, Customer Service Excellence. The commitment was displayed from Senior Management levels through to operations and front-line staff.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those people involved in the overall assessment process. It has been a pleasure meeting with your team and having the opportunity to observe your service remotely.

The outcome of the assessment was -

**“Continued award of the Customer Service Excellence Standard has been recommended”**

Address:	East Renfrewshire Council - Education Department Council Offices, 211 Main Street, Barrhead, G78 1SY		
Standard(s):	Customer Service Excellence	Accreditation Body(s)	UKAS
Representative:	Marilyn Brennan Quality Improvement Officer		
Site(s) assessed:	Remote (Covid19)	Date(s) of audit(s):	24-02-2021
Lead Assessor:	Robert Sullivan	Additional team member(s):	
Type of Assessment:	Annual Review		
Review of Certification Claims	Claims are accurate and in accordance with SGS guidance		



## 2. CONTEXT

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East Renfrewshire Council - Education Department has around 200 staff and provides an education service through 7 secondary schools, 24 primary schools, 13 nursery classes, 8 family centres and one special school for children and young people with severe learning difficulties. The Education Department also has responsibility for Adult Learning and Facilities Management.

The service has around 18,000 pupils, 1,400 teaching staff and 1,300 local government staff as its main customers alongside parents and carers.

East Renfrewshire continued to advance equity and excellence throughout a wide range of local and national attainment measures. Children and young people achieved high standards of attainment throughout the broad general education and senior phase.

East Renfrewshire schools again achieved very strong performance in key measures. 81% of young people in S4 attained 5 or more qualifications at National 5. This was the highest performance to date and represents a 20% increase since 2011. Barrhead High, Eastwood High, Mearns Castle, St Ninian's and Woodfarm High Schools achieved their best ever performance in 5 or more qualifications at National 5. Williamwood High School achieved their second-best result to date. The Council recorded best ever performances in the proportion of S5 learners achieving 1+, 3+ and 5+ Highers in S5 with 87%, 72% and 50% respectively. At Advanced Higher in S6, the authority also achieved its best ever performance with 45.5% of the original S4 cohort achieving 1 or more Advanced Higher awards.

During the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the education department provides support and guidance to settings which highlighted the importance of ongoing engagement with learners and their families and maintaining a focus of wellbeing. The extent of 'in school', remote or blended learning has varied throughout this assessment period dependant on Scottish Government guidance. Learning hubs were established for vulnerable children and children of key workers; all other children and young people were supported by teachers and support staff to engage with and participate in digital and remote learning opportunities to ensure continuing education provision when this was appropriate.

Where education was remote in nature, senior and pastoral care staff in all settings maintained regular contact with children and families as required, whether they were learning at home or in a hub and provided additional support to address any wellbeing or learning needs.

At present, there is only limited in-school provision in line with Scottish Government requirements but learning and teaching continues utilising technology.

## 3. Method of Assessment

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The assessment method used was a full remote assessment due to the current





circumstances of the Covid19 Pandemic. Evidence was submitted electronically via email and the assessment interviews and observations took place over the telephone and via computer. Microsoft Teams was used for the opening and closing meeting and to conduct interviews with staff and customers.

The assessment was undertaken in two stages; the first was a review of your self-assessment submission. This review enabled the assessor to gain an understanding of how the organisation has met the requirements of the Customer Service Excellence standard.

The next stage was to review the actual service delivered remotely. This was conducted through reviewing practice as well as speaking to staff, partners and customers. This included following customer journeys through your processes and how these aligned with customer insight.

During the assessment process, the criteria are scored on a four-band scale:

**COMPLIANCE PLUS** - Behaviours or practices which exceed the requirements of the standard and are viewed as exceptional or as exemplar to others, either within the applicant's organisation or the wider customer service arena.

**COMPLIANT** - Your organisation has a variety of good quality evidence which demonstrates that you comply fully with this element. The evidence which reflects compliance is consistent throughout and is embedded in the culture of the organisation.

**PARTIAL COMPLIANCE** - Your organisation has some evidence but there are significant gaps. The gaps could include:

- Parts of the applicant's organisation which are currently not compliant and/or
- Areas where the quality of the evidence is poor or incomplete and/or
- Areas which have begun to be addressed and are subject to significant further development and/or
- Areas where compliance has only been evident for a very short period of time

**NON-COMPLIANT** - Your organisation has little or no evidence of compliance or what evidence you do have refers solely to a small (minor) part of your organisation.

The current scheme allows applicants a maximum number of partial compliances, equating to a pass mark of 80% for all criteria.

#### **4. OPENING MEETING**

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The remote assessment commenced with an opening meeting using Microsoft Teams.



The assessment activity was discussed. The itinerary had been agreed with East Renfrewshire Council- Education Department in advance. The organisation was informed that all information obtained during the assessment would be treated as strictly confidential.

The scope of Assessment was confirmed as: East Renfrewshire Council-Education Department

## 5. REMOTE ASSESSMENT

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The Assessor was supported throughout the assessment by Marilyn Brennan and other personnel within the organisation were involved when assessing activities within their responsibility.

The assessment resulted in the raising of no partial compliances. A number of observations are listed in Section 7 of this report.

Number of good practices awarded during the assessment	23
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Have the partial compliance(s) raised at the last assessment been closed?	N/A
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Criterion		Maximum number of partial compliances	Actual number of non-compliances	Actual number of partial compliances	Actual number of Areas for Improvement	Fully Compliant
1	Customer Insight	2	0	0	0	11
2	The Culture of the Organisation	2	0	0	0	11
3	Information and Access	2	0	0	1	11
4	Delivery	3	0	0	0	13
5	Timeliness and Quality of Service	2	0	0	0	10



## 6. AREAS OF PARTIAL COMPLIANCE

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### CRITERION 1

No Partials Raised

### CRITERION 2

No Partials Raised

### CRITERION 3

No Partials Raised

### CRITERION 4

No Partials Raised

### CRITERION 5

No Partials Raised



## 7. OBSERVATIONS

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During the site assessment, the following general observations were made. These include: positive areas scored as Compliance Plus; areas of good practice; areas for improvement identified throughout the entire assessment process, as listed below.

### Areas for Improvement

- You may wish to consider any opportunities to tighten up communications between yourself, other providers of education such as Colleges and young people. As young people are using more platforms and means of communication at School and at Colleges there is the possibility of communication being missed unless young people are very proactive in checking all possible means of accessing emails and other information regularly. There may be a need to provide young people with training or to ensure systems are able to send messages and information to one default address (3.2.2)

### Areas of Good Practice

- You have a long-standing culture of ensuring decisions are informed by data and data analysis. In addition, you evaluate your service and any pilots or initiatives to gather information on their effectiveness and efficiency. You utilise a wide range of current data to better understand customers, their needs and the outcomes achieved. There was a good understanding of the need to evaluate different methodologies and interventions and to evaluate impact and positive outcomes for customers
- This culture of evaluation is assisted by the increasing use of tools such as GLOW, Microsoft Teams and Forms
- You demonstrated that you have systems in place to identify those hard to reach and disadvantaged customers and to engage and involve them in the wider discussions around your service. Your consultation is a strength of your organisation and one that is sustained and built upon over time. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic and the need for delivery of services and changes over time, at pace, you were to demonstrate an ethos of consultation



- You evidenced that you use a wide range of consultation methods and opportunities. In utilising such a comprehensive, embracing and embedded approach to consultation you maximise the opportunity for the widest possible representation of stakeholders
- You are very aware that some citizens, parents/ carers and young people may find it more challenging to engage with traditional school-based consultation methods and take proactive steps to engage and consult with these hard to reach and disadvantaged individuals and groups. This was evidenced at this assessment visit
- You have also involved Parent Councils in evaluating the remote learning experience provided and used this to further improve the service
- Your consultation methods includes questionnaires, focus groups, quantitative and qualitative training evaluations, Directors Forum, Parent Councils, Citizens' Panel, Pupil Equity Funding evaluations and customer feedback monitoring
- You presented a very comprehensive range of evidence that was both relevant and well presented for the CSE Annual Review. Your work in identifying appropriate customer journeys and arranging for appropriate stakeholders to be available assisted the Assessor in looking in-depth at the journeys. In particular, your focus on remote learning and related processes during this time was both relevant and appropriate. Staff involved in the process were open and enthusiastic for what they do and to further improve their service offering
- You are continuing to use the CSE framework to evaluate of parts of your service. In general terms, CSE has become a useful and embedded tool for continuous improvement within the service. It is becoming increasingly clear that there is a strong person-centred and individualised customer experience where possible across the service. You continue to develop, encourage and demonstrate good customer insight
- At this assessment, you demonstrated how your work on supporting the delivery of high-quality remote learning experiences was having a positive outcome for young people. The Assessor was able to speak with young people about this and they confirmed the experience had been a high quality and improving one
- You continue your strong commitment to involving and engaging with customers throughout your service. This was evidenced throughout this review and was verified in discussion with customers as well as through the evidence presented. You make good use of such as focus or consultation groups by using both existing groups and groups brought together to reflect the nature of the specific issue being consulted on
- The commitment to customer focus comes from the senior leadership of the organisation and has become embedded within your service in meaningful ways. Your ongoing commitment to Customer Service Excellence and your work to act



on feedback from CSE assessments is testimony to this commitment. At a Council level you have revised your core values which are now; Ambition, Kindness and Trust

- You have again reviewed the increasing demand for the services of the Education Department because of increased house building in the catchment area. You demonstrated high levels of insight into the characteristics, needs and preferences of both existing and potential customers. You have already developed new facilities and have additional improvements planned to take account of the increased demand for your service
- This year, the Assessor was able to discuss several issues in some detail with staff and other stakeholders. It was obvious in discussions about supporting learners and families that staff were clear as to the 'added value' of such developments and their role in the wider education and socio-economic landscape.
- The Assessor noted the increasingly popularity and appropriate use of vulnerable learners accessing hubs during Covid-19. Your Standards and Quality report reported increases from 24 people on Day 1, to 228 people in the latter stages of the first lockdown. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lockdown, the attendance of vulnerable children has increased to 612 for weekly attendance
- Stakeholders spoken to by the Assessor included school teaching staff, early years staff, staff from partner organisations and customers
- There was a healthy culture of openness between your staff, customers and partners. It was clear that they were confident and at ease when giving feedback and asking questions of your staff. During this assessment, where pupils and parents raised ideas for improvement staff were keen to listen and accept possible areas for improvement and to take ownership of these
- You continue to have very high levels of customer satisfaction at various levels of service delivery and this was evidenced through a range of quantitative surveys and other qualitative information. These high levels continue to improve over time and are commendable
- You value your staff and their customer focus. You recognize them increasingly frequently through such as the kudos recognition process and nomination for the Council Staff Awards. The continuation of this ethos was evidenced at this remote assessment
- In recognising that customers increasingly use IT and the Internet to conduct transactions, you have further enhanced and improved your online payments facility. This facility is now very comprehensive and well used by customers



- At the last assessment, the Assessor noted the increasing use and penetration of eLearning through GLOW and other platforms. As a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic and related Scottish Government restrictions, a significant amount of learning and teaching during this year has been remote in its nature. As a result the early adoption of eLearning has provided a useful foundation on which to build. In the year that this assessment covers, you have further enhanced the use of GLOW as well as other technologies such as MS Teams and Google Classrooms to provide and enhance the learning and teaching experience
- You have again performed well when involved with regulators such as Education Scotland the Care Inspectorate
- As noted in the context section of this report you have had a successful year in terms of attainment as measured by SQA results

### **Areas of Compliance Plus**

- You evidenced and discussed the ways in which you collect, record and analyse comprehensive data about the characteristics of prospective and current customers. This included census data and information on such as new housing developments within the area. Data includes such as the early learning and childcare provision detailing such as The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation and ethnicity data. In addition, you continue to make good use of customer data to prioritise resources and to best meet their demands (1.1.1)
- You continue to evidence a comprehensive and detailed understanding of your customers and stakeholders both at a macro and micro level. In addition to this being a general feature of your service you make particular efforts to tailor services where the impact is most vital and likely to have significant impact on key outcomes. You link service delivery with the Council strategy and policies as well as with wider Scottish Government and National Frameworks and priorities (1.1.2)
- You evidenced your work in identifying those who are 'hard to reach' and disadvantaged. Importantly, you have utilised appropriate means to consult and involve these groups and individuals in order to tailor your service in ways that are meaningful to them. There were numerous examples of close working with parents/ carers, pupils and staff. This work was evidenced in discussion with a range of stakeholders during this assessment visit (1.1.3)



- You have a very well established and developed engagement strategy. This is reviewed in a frequent and systematic way to ensure the robustness and comprehensiveness of the measures used. This was discussed and evidenced at this assessment visit. There is within an annual calendar that demonstrates the strategic, pre-planned nature of core consultation activities. The range of methods and groups involved in consultation are referred to throughout this report (1.2.1)
- You understand the importance of understanding your customers and have evidenced a range of effective consultation mechanisms. The understanding of customers, alongside being at the forefront of learning and teaching pedagogy and utilizing Government Policy, is viewed as integral to continually improving your service and you also advise customers of the results and action taken. At the highest level, the Director of Education engages with pupils and uses these consultations to further improve insight into service delivery and to impact change where appropriate. The Director has also involved other Council Services in feeding into the consultation of, and with, stakeholders. Your system for pupil representation at school level involves the use of minutes and Action Plans to track issues raised and any action required. At another level, there is community engagement which seeks to involve communities in engaging with the Council to develop services to meet the needs of local communities and The Education Department plays an important part in such discussions (1.2.2)
- You have very high levels of customer satisfaction and these continue to improve over time. The Assessor was able to view comparable data over time as part of your evidence at this remote assessment (1.3.4)
- You work with customers to develop insight about their specific needs and preferences and prioritise these. You then develop your service to assist customers in meeting their identified needs and preferences throughout their customer journey with your service. At this remote assessment, the Assessor spoke with a range of stakeholders and was able to see evidence of your development of insight and the way that was used to continuously develop service provision in ways that were meaningful and added value to customers. Discussions around the evolution of learning and teaching throughout the Covid-19 pandemic was one good example of this (1.3.5)
- There is a well-established and very strong corporate commitment to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery and leaders in your organisation actively support this. As discussed in this report, there are many and varied strategies in place to engage with customers to determine their views on service provision and ensure that high levels of customer insight are maintained. Throughout this remote review there was strong evidence that a wide range of consultation mechanisms are deployed, and results and actions are published, and this informs implementation where appropriate. At an individual level, there are appropriate consultation processes in place with your customers and staff alongside relevant action planning and review processes (2.1.1)





- You have used your extensive customer insight to inform policy and strategy and to prioritise service improvement activity. In this assessment, we considered remote learning and teaching, supporting vulnerable children and learners and vocational learning throughout the Covid-19 pandemic to date. There were numerous examples evidenced of where the evolving needs and preferences of customers were taken account of and directly influenced service improvement and delivery. One example of this was the changing nature and type of support offered in the provision of meals to those with free school meals entitlement (2.1.2)
- You understand the importance of training in respect of Data Protection and Information Security to protect the privacy of customers. The Department has ensured that staff have been appropriately trained around the legislation in respect of Child Protection and Data Sharing. You now have an officer responsible for compliance with GDPR in place and this was confirmed at this remote assessment (2.1.5)
- At this assessment, the Assessor spoke with several staff from different aspects of the service during MS Teams meetings. It was apparent that staff are empowered to act in a person-centred and learner focused way. One example being during a discussion around opportunities to improve communications between the service, colleges and pupils. Staff were also very confident and able to explain and answer questions about their work. Staff also contribute to the wider educational dialogue in Scotland and beyond and demonstrated high levels of understanding as to why certain practices were being implemented and could explain this in a user-friendly way (2.1.6)
- At this review, you were able to evidence a strong customer focus in relation to training and development. Your Continued Professional Development (CPD) provision has largely moved online whilst maintaining very high levels of satisfaction. Attendance at CPD courses has increased due to the greater accessibility of online training and whilst staff were working remotely (2.2.1)
- You continue to develop training and development for staff and evaluate the effectiveness of this and other interventions on customer focus and outcomes. You use a performance management system to provide constructive feedback on the customer focus delivered across the service. You conduct Classroom observations at school, Quality Improvement Officer and Education Scotland levels (2.2.3)
- Customer facing staff insight and experience is incorporated into internal processes, policy development and service planning through a variety of channels. As indicated earlier, staff have a keen awareness of customer needs and preferences at both a macro and micro level. At this assessment, stakeholders confirmed the staff had a good understanding of young people as individuals. In addition, during this remote assessment it was clear that, across the service, staff understand customer needs and preferences. Where appropriate, they use this knowledge to tailor services to maximise impact and positive outcomes (2.2.4)



- You value the contribution your staff make to delivering customer focused services, and leaders, managers and staff demonstrate these behaviours. You nominate staff for the Council Staff Awards. You also utilise the Kudos Awards to acknowledge staff for their customer focus (2.2.5)
- You were able to demonstrate that your information provision is comprehensive and that you communicate directly where any new initiative or practice is introduced. You tailor information to specific customer group where appropriate. During this remote assessment you provided evidence of providing a full range of information about your services through different channels. Stakeholders also spoke of good communications generally (3.1.1)
- You provide your customers with the information they need in ways that meet their needs and preferences, using a variety of appropriate channels. There is much and varied evidence of this and that was provided during this remote assessment visit. As a norm, you provide information in ways that take account of the needs, preferences, capacity and capability of customers. You adjust the way you deliver at school level to suit different learners and respond to preferences for different information and delivery methods. During the Covid-19 pandemic, you have made contact with young people and carers to ensure their information needs are being best met during challenging circumstances (3.2.1)
- You have improved the quality of your information to make it more accessible. This includes increasing use of GLOW and increased use of such as video and networking opportunities. You are making increased use of Microsoft Forms and Teams. Throughout this year you have developed such as your Digihub, Lingualab and Equalities newsletters further (3.2.3)
- You make your services easily accessible to all customers and stakeholders through provision of a range of alternative channels. Examples being, online learning through GLOW, Google Classroom, vocational education in Colleges and the Community. In additional access via other routes such as other Council Departments is possible (3.3.1)
- You ensure that where customers can visit your premises in person, facilities are as clean and comfortable as possible. During the Covid-19 pandemic, you have implemented cleaning regimes, hygiene protocols and sanitising facilities. You make sanitising products available for pupils and staff in school; children and young people to supported to use these on entering and exiting classrooms to keep spaces and equipment clean. You have implemented additional signage and information to support increased hygiene and social distancing. Staff are trained to use PPE where appropriate and clear guidance issued, supported by ease of access to PPE as appropriate. Additional PPE is provided where staff identify in risk assessments that they need this to feel comfortable at work (3.3.3)



- You have arrangements with additional Colleges to supply additional and a wider range of opportunities to staff and pupils. This year, the Assessor heard how partnership working with Colleges continues to support workforce development, adult learning and vocational qualifications. The Assessor spoke with staff, young people and parents involved in these areas as part of this remote assessment. As noted earlier, work with active schools and the hub provision was significant this year in response to Covid-19 and Scottish Government guidelines (3.4.1)
- You have continued your work with a range of partners such as local Colleges, Family First and Active Schools to provide greater choice and joined-up services.. It is clear in these instances who is accountable for the service. In the vocational programme, pupils and parents/ carers have a dedicated telephone number and staff team to contact (3.4.2)
- You support the local and wider community in several ways. Some examples include your ongoing commitment to the support for future generations of early learning centre and school staff. You participated in a national consultation to adapt support for trainee and probationer teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic, and support for schools to implement the resulting guidance. Your QIO team input to a review of the Scottish Government parental engagement and involvement survey to include a question set with a focus on equity, equality and mental health. Your Educational Psychology team were involved in supporting the parent community and in liaison with Social Work to ensure families and the wider community receive support when needs are identified through interaction with Education services (3.4.3)
- In 'non-core' business ways, your work in the humanitarian hub in providing food and Christmas gifts is worthy of note. A group of technical teachers also provided face masks to support key workers in the health care sector (3.4.3)
- You monitor and meet your performance standards and you tell your customers about your performance. East Renfrewshire continues to perform very well in national qualifications. In addition, you perform very well when analysing your leaver destinations. You have detailed monitoring of performance and report on your performance at school and authority level and this is used to proactively manage and support pupils and staff. The use of such data at all levels within the Department is actively encouraged (4.1.2)
- You demonstrated that you benchmark your performance against that of similar or complementary organisations and have used that information to improve your service. You also make use of the Insight Virtual Comparator to benchmark performance. You have worked with Schools to support young people into positive destinations and use benchmarking to ensure your performance in this area is of a very high standard. You performed very well in these areas and use benchmarking to improve performance more widely (4.2.3)



- You have significantly developed and become engaged in more benchmarking and opportunities to learn from and contribute to good practice. You have a strong ethos and culture of being a learning organisation and being involved in the wider educational environment is part of this. You are involved with a group of Local Authorities (the West Partnership) and this has led to additional partnership working and the spread of good practice. You have examples of your good practice published on the National Improvement Hub (4.2.4)
- You identify any dips in performance against your standards and explain these to customers, together with action you are taking to put things right and prevent further recurrence. As noted throughout this report, you are keen to collect, analyse, report on and learn from your performance. During this remote assessment, a stakeholder identified an opportunity for improvement and your staff were keen to further explore this and how improvements could be made. In your Standards and Quality report you note some dips in performance together with reasons and improvement opportunities. In terms of Vocational Courses, there have been some reduction in number on offer. These changes were explained to learners and parents directly and alternatives offered. This information was shared promptly to allow timely choices to be made by customers. Where the quality of courses has been compromised, pupils are supported to identify how courses next year can provide onwards progression (4.3.1)
- You give staff training and guidance to handle complaints and to investigate them objectively. At this remote assessment, you evidenced that all senior officers undertook extensive training with Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) in December 2020. This process included considering your structures to ensure that officers are able to take action to resolve complaints. In addition, you have arranged for SPSO will provide similar training for head teachers as part of the Head Teacher Induction programme from August 2021 (4.3.3)
- You demonstrated that you analyse customer feedback and complaints and act to fully understand such feedback, learn from any mistakes and implement corrective actions and improvements where appropriate. You do this at a local level, but this is also monitored at Head Office to ensure learning takes place and opportunities for continuous improvement and the spreading of Good Practice are not missed. Complaint trends and issues are again reported to and discussed by the Education Leadership Team who build any relevant issues into the Quality Assurance regime to ensure that issues are addressed across the authority. You publish areas of focus and where improvement actions could be made to further improve your service. Examples of evidence provided being your Diversity Action Plan and associated staff training. In addition to providing good evidence of this, you spoke comprehensively about this during this remote assessment (4.3.4)
- You have continued to develop your Family Friendly Accreditation scheme and Standards. In more general terms, the General Teaching Council for Scotland standards govern teacher standards, and these are reviewed through your PRD system. For central support staff you conduct 'Quality Conversations' to set and



review appropriate standards. Some non-teaching staff within the service will also require to follow the standards of their professional bodies (5.1.2)

## 8. ACTION PLANNING & NEXT STEPS

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The achievement of Customer Service Excellence is an ongoing activity and it is important that East Renfrewshire Council-Education Department continues to meet the elements of the criteria throughout the three years the hallmark is awarded for. Efforts must be made by Customer Service Excellence holders to continually improve their service.

We recommend that you develop an action plan based on the findings of this report. The action plan does not need to be a separate document and is likely to be more effective if the actions are embedded in your normal improvement and service developments plans.

We will undertake an annual review that will look at your continued compliance with the Customer Service Excellence. As part of the review we will also look at progress on any findings of the previous assessments.

In addition to reviewing progress outlined above, we will also review the services delivery, done so by following customer journeys.

For more information on the annual review please refer to our document “Building on your Customer Service Excellence success – Preparing for the annual review”.

Holders must inform SGS of any major changes in the service provision covered by the scope of the certificate. This includes reorganisation or mergers.

In addition, SGS must be informed should the certified service experience a significant increase in customer complaints or critical press coverage.

If you are in doubt at any stage, we strongly recommend contacting the Customer Service Team for advice on the significance of any service or organisational change, or issues surrounding customer complaints.

SGS will visit within the next 12 months for the annual review.

SGS recommends that East Renfrewshire Council-Education Department retains a copy of this report to aid continuous improvement, and as a reference document for future assessment reviews.

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