

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEETHURSDAY 9 JUNE 2016Report 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 for 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 January 2015 and assessment is undertaken on an annual basis.

**REPORT**

5. The assessor spent the two day visit reviewing practice and interviewing staff, partners and customers. The assessment was undertaken in two stages; the first was a review of the self-assessment submission. The review enabled the assessor to gain an understanding of how East Renfrewshire Council's Education Department meets the requirements of the Customer Service Excellence standard.

6. The second stage was to review the actual service delivered in schools by our educational psychology service. This was conducted through reviewing practice by following two 'customer journeys'. This was carried out by interviewing parents, teachers, head teachers, support staff and psychologists to see how these aligned with customer insight. The outcome of the review was the continued award of the Customer Service Excellence Standard.

7. The assessment report, included in Appendix 1 of this paper, noted:

*“You have very high levels of customer insight and use this effectively to develop services to meet the specific needs of customers.”*

*“There continues to be a strong corporate commitment to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery and leaders in your organisation actively support this. 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.”*

8. The report recognises the department’s continuing commitment to providing excellent services and to seeking continuous improvement. It identified ten 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.”*

9. These areas are set out in the report but included: very high levels of customer insight used effectively to develop services; consultation of customers integral to continuous improvement; commitment to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery; customer insight informing policy; training in Data Protections and Information Security to protect the privacy of customers; staff awareness of customers’ needs and preferences; provision of customer information, including use of electronic media; partnership working to meet customer needs; analysis of customer feedback; family friendly accreditation.

10. It identified one area of improvement and asked the department to consider making the Educational Psychology Service useful information videos available on any device when outside of the Education Department.

## **FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS**

11. Costs for the annual assessment are met within the Education Department’s revenue budget.

## **CONCLUSION**

12. The assessment report and the confirmation of the continued achievement of the Customer Service Excellence standard recognise the Education Department’s sustained commitment to service excellence and continuous improvement.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

13. 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.

Convener Contact Details

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Appendix

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

Key Words

Customer Service Excellence, East Renfrewshire Education Department, assessment, continuous improvement

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# Assessment Report

## CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE





## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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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 in action.

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:	Gerard McLaughlin		
Site(s) assessed:	Education Psychology Service, St Johns Campus	Date(s) of audit(s):	28 and 29 January 2016
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. East Renfrewshire Council – Education Department

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### CONTEXT

East Renfrewshire Council - Education Department is based in two sites has around 200 staff and provides an education service through secondary schools, primary schools and nursery classes, pre-five establishments and one special school for children and young people with severe learning difficulties. The service has around 18,000 pupils, 1400 teaching staff and 1300 local government staff as its main customers alongside parents and carers.

### 3. Method of Assessment

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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 on-site. 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 on-site assessment commenced with an opening meeting.

The assessment activity and the partial compliances were 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. ON-SITE ASSESSMENT

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The Assessor was accompanied throughout the assessment by Gerard McLaughlin 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.

Criterion	Maximum number of Partial compliance	Actual number of non-compliance	Actual number of partial compliance	Actual number of Areas for Improvement
1	2	0	0	0
2	2	0	0	0
3	2	0	0	0
4	3	0	0	0
5	2	0	0	0

Number of good practices awarded during the assessment	16
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Have the partial compliance(s) raised at the last assessment been closed?	Yes
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## **6. AREAS OF PARTIAL COMPLIANCE**

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### **CRITERION 1**

No Partial Raised

### **CRITERION 2**

No Partial Raised

### **CRITERION 3**

No Partial Raised

### **CRITERION 4**

No Partial Raised

### **CRITERION 5**

No Partial 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**

- During this Annual Review, the Assessor noted that the useful information videos on the Educational Psychology Service website could not be viewed on any device when outside of the Education Department. You should consider action to remedy this

### **Areas of Good Practice**

- 5.1.1 At the last assessment it was identified that your standard for telephone response times was that you would answer the telephone promptly. As this was a subjective measure and it was not measureable as required in this element of the Standard a Partial Compliance against the Standard was raised. You have now



set a standard for answering telephones of 20 seconds which is measureable and meets the requirements of the Standard

- You prepared well for the CSE annual review and provided a range of evidence that was relevant and well presented. 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. It is clear that you wish to work with the assessment body in a positive and constructive way to ensure that the assessment is as robust and rigorous as possible. In doing so, you add value to the service through continuous improvement and improved customer focus and satisfaction
- You continue to develop your service in customer focused ways and use the Customer Service Excellence framework as a means to deliver increasingly customer focused services. This can be seen once again by the increasing number of Compliance Plus scores awarded this year
- You have a strong commitment to involving and engaging with customers throughout your Department. This was evidenced during this Annual Review and was verified in discussion with customers as well as through the evidence presented
- The commitment to customer focus comes from the top of the organisation and has become embedded within your service in meaningful ways
- At this Annual Review you discussed the increasing demand for the services of the Education Department as a result 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
- At this Annual Review, you demonstrated a very strong customer focus throughout the Department. Staff from all areas interviewed were clear that their key role was to improve education and learning for citizens of East Renfrewshire. This permeated all aspects and personnel of the service that the assessor encountered during the assessment
- Customers spoken to by the Assessor included 'internal' customers of the Educational Psychology Service as well as external customers. All customers expressed high levels of satisfaction with the services provided
- Customers were particularly impressed by the flexible approach of staff to meet the changing needs of children and parents/ carers
- Customers expressed a view that your service actively listened to and acted upon their expressed needs and preferences



- Customers were clearly confident and at ease in speaking with a range of professionals within your Department and staff were very accessible to pupils and parents/ carers
- You work with partner agencies in order to best support your customers, prevent customer shuttling and offer a 'one stop shop' where possible
- Customers felt that at all stages in their dealings with your service and partner agencies they were kept well informed and had a clear understanding of the next steps, timescales and accountability
- In discussion with Educational Psychology, teaching and support staff, the Assessor noted a very high degree of empathy for children and parents
- You continue to have very high levels of customer satisfaction at various levels of service delivery
- The Education Department continues to perform well across a range of National statistics and measures

### **Areas of Compliance Plus**

- You have very high levels of customer insight and use this effectively to develop services to meet the specific needs of customers. Throughout this Annual Review the Assessor was impressed by the very detailed knowledge staff at all levels displayed about customers often without any reference to files or customer information. This detailed insight was verified in discussion with parents spoken to by the Assessor (1.1.2)
- You have made the consultation of customers integral to continually improving your service and 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. Your system for student/ 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. At the Annual review some discussion revolved around the Auchenback Community where various community events were held to involve the community and thereafter to report on and agree Action Plans (1.2.2)



- There continues to be a strong corporate commitment to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery and leaders in your organisation actively support this. 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 Annual Review there was evidence that a wide range of consultation mechanisms are deployed and that results and actions are published and fed into mechanisms such as forward plans to monitor implementation where appropriate. It was pleasing to note that staff at all levels were aware of the need to make consultation as representative as possible and of the importance of effective consultation. In terms of the customer journeys this year, the Educational Psychology service has the consultation of customers and other stakeholders at the core of the way in which it works. Another example discussed was the involvement of the Director of Education with school pupils to gain insight into service delivery and using pupil feedback to effect change (2.1.1)
- You have used your extensive customer insight to inform policy and strategy and to prioritise service improvement activity. This was very clearly articulated within the customer journeys followed in this Annual Review. The differing and changing needs of the customers over lengthy service interventions was met with changing types and levels of resources to meet the needs and preferences of customers at that time whilst being informed by professional input (2.1.2)
- The authority has high levels of training in respect of Data Protection and Information Security in order to protect the privacy of customers. The Department has ensured that all Head Teachers have been appropriately trained and that this has been cascaded to class teachers and other staff (2.1.5)
- Customer facing staffs' insight and experience is incorporated into internal processes, policy development and service planning through a variety of channels. It was clear during the assessment that staff spoken to had a keen awareness of customer needs and preferences at both a macro and micro level. Staff are encouraged to utilise their in-depth knowledge of customers to provide tailored and personalised service delivery where appropriate. Staff involved in the customer journeys followed in this Annual Review used their insight to develop appropriate service provision in the short, medium and long term (2.2.4)
- You provide your customers with the information they need in ways which meet their needs and preferences, using a variety of appropriate channels. At this Annual Review we focused on two in-depth Educational Psychology Service journeys in particular. In this context it is the case that, at times, quite complex diagnosis and explanation are required to be passed on to teaching staff, parents/carers, children and other stakeholders. In discussions, it became apparent that staff are effective at providing information in appropriate ways and times to improve understanding. The Department in general recognises the importance of modern technology in information provision and has developed a number of websites for such as Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and the Educational Psychology Service. Other examples of this include the growing use



of social media. This increased use of electronic media as a way of disseminating information has been welcomed by customers (3.2.1)

- You continue to make arrangements with other providers and partners to offer and supply co-ordinated services, and these arrangements have demonstrable benefits for your customers. In the context of this Annual Review, the work with partners in a 'joined-up' way was paramount to the effectiveness of service delivery. It was clear that such as the Educational Psychology Service working with Social Services, Carlibar Communication Centre, Head Teachers, teaching staff, support staff, other specialist resources and parents/ carers was necessary to provide the most effective service to customers (3.4.1)
- You were clearly able to demonstrate that you analyse customer feedback and complaints and take action to fully understand such feedback, learn from any mistakes and implement corrective actions and improvements where appropriate. It was also clear that you do this at a local level but also that this is monitored and progressed 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 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 (4.3.4)
- You have continued to develop your Family Friendly Accreditation scheme over the past year. You have also developed and provided training about and monitored its effectiveness. All Nurseries now have bronze level accreditation with 37% of the original participants now having Silver status and working towards Gold. This approach is currently being rolled out further across the Department (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.