

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Thursday 11 June 2015

Report by Director of Education

CUSTOMER 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 2014 and assessment is undertaken on an annual basis.

**REPORT**

5. The assessor spent the one and a half day visit interviewing a wide range of customers and service users. The outcome of the review was the award of the Customer Service Excellence Standard.

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

*"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 real attempts to engage with customers to determine their views on service provision and ensure that high levels of customer insight are maintained."*

7. The report recognises the department's continuing commitment to providing excellent services and to seeking continuous improvement. It identified seven 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."*

8. These areas are set out in the report but included: commitment to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery; customer insight informing policy; 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.

9. It identified an area of improvement and asked the department to review its current practice of guaranteeing that the customer will speak to someone in person, not an answering machine when they call, as this may conflict with the ability to provide a specific measure for answering enquiries.

## **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 achievement of the Customer Service Excellence standard recognise the Education Department's sustained commitment to service excellence and continuous improvement.

## **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.

Mhairi Shaw  
Director of Education  
June 2015

### 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



# Assessment Report

## CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE





East Renfrewshire Council - Education Department

Address:	Council Offices, 211 Main Street, Barrhead, G78 1SY		
Standard(s):	CSE	Accreditation Body(s)	UKAS
Representative:	Clare Creighton		
Site(s) audited:	St. John's Campus Isobel Mair School St. Mark's PS Mearns PS	Date(s) of audit(s):	6 and 7 /1/2015
Effective No. of Personnel	200	No. of sites:	2
Lead auditor:	Robert Sullivan	Additional team member(s):	NA
Type of Assessment:	Annual Review		
Certificate Outcome	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Granted <input type="checkbox"/> Withheld	<input type="checkbox"/> Continued <input type="checkbox"/> Suspended	
Certification Claims are accurate and in accordance with SGS guidance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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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, 18 pre-five establishments (10 nursery classes, 2 nurseries and 6 family centres) 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. The Education Department also has responsibility for Arts, Libraries and Sports, Adult and Family Learning and Facilities Management.

Following the assessment, East Renfrewshire Council - Education Department were 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.

During the assessment one partial compliance with the standard was identified. Details of this can be found in section 5 of this report.

As a result of these findings:

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

Yes  No

## 2. METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

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

The next stage was an on-site assessment. The objective of this part of the assessment was to obtain evidence demonstrating that the applicant was meeting the requirements of the standard, within the area covered by the scope of the application. This evidence was obtained through a documentation review as well as interviews with staff, customers, representatives of partner organisations, and senior management.

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 in the wider public 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.

### **3. OPENING MEETING**

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The on-site assessment commenced with an opening meeting.

The assessment activity was discussed. The itinerary, which had been forwarded to East Renfrewshire Council - Education Department in advance, was agreed. 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"



#### 4. ON-SITE ASSESSMENT

The Assessor was accompanied throughout the assessment by Clare Creighton and other Personnel within the organisation were involved when assessing activities within their responsibility.

The assessment resulted in the raising of one partial compliance. A number of observations are listed in Section 7 of this report.

Details of the partial compliance can be found in section 5 for East Renfrewshire Council - Education Department to address as appropriate.

Criterion	Number of Elements	Maximum number of Partial compliance	Actual number of non compliance	Actual number of partial compliance
1	11	2	0	0
2	11	2	0	0
3	12	2	0	0
4	13	3	0	0
5	10	2	0	1

	Yes	No
Have the partial compliance(s) raised at the last assessment been closed?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## **5. AREAS OF PARTIAL COMPLIANCE**

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### **CRITERION 1**

None

### **CRITERION 2**

None

### **CRITERION 3**

None

### **CRITERION 4**

None

### **CRITERION 5**

- 5.1.1 Your standard for telephone response times is that you will answer the telephone promptly. As this is a subjective measure it is not measurable as required in this element of the Standard.

## **6. OBSERVATIONS**

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

### **Areas for Improvement**

- You should consider if the standard for telephone response times could be made specific and measurable.
- You may wish to consider the process for telephone answering in Head Office that currently includes a system of calls transferring after three rings and ensure that this works alongside the appropriate standard for response times to telephones.



## Areas of Good Practice

- You prepared well for the CSE annual review and provided a range of evidence in electronic format which worked well. 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.
- 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 again be seen by the increasing number of Compliance Plus scores awarded this year.
- You have now constructed a schedule of consultation indicating your consultation methods, frequency and review dates for consultations in order to more clearly articulate and consider the methods used and their effectiveness.
- In this assessment, there was a 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 indicated that they felt very well supported by HQ functions in both a pastoral and professional way. This was noted from parents, pupils and staff throughout the service.
- You continue to see value in consulting with stakeholders in a variety of ways appropriate to them. You do this in a variety of ways including the Directors Forum, the Equalities Forum, Pupil's Forum, Parents Forum and a range of surveys. Stakeholders spoken to confirmed that this is the case and that they feel consultation to be meaningful.
- There is a strong ethos of sharing resources, ideas and good practice across the service and this is facilitated by the Education Department centrally. This was discussed during the assessment and examples given included the role of parental involvement co-ordinators to share Good Practice across schools and the Equalities Forum Showcase which allowed best practice to be shared.
- You have conducted an employee survey and the results have been fed back to stakeholders with associated action plans.
- You have very high levels of customer satisfaction that is evidenced in both your Education Department surveys and through the Citizens Panel results. The assessor viewed the latest data from across Schools which showed that 97% of parents were happy with the service delivered.
- There was evidence of the organization responding to the needs, preferences and choices of individual customers and groups through the provision of courses and at curriculum planning stages. This includes masterclasses at Primary level and Course options and vocational opportunities at Secondary Schools.
- There was evidence of high performance from the service as seen from statistics supplied during the assessment. This also included evidence of positive feedback from The Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland.

- In speaking to and observing customers it was clear that they felt comfortable in speaking to staff and others about their experiences. The assessor spoke to pupils, parents/ carers and staff.
- You continue to look in an in-depth way at the needs of young people at a very early age to ensure access to appropriate services at the right time. This should lead to service provision that is best able to best assist in their development in the most cost-effective way and to secure the best outcomes for them.
- You are about to open 'The Foundry' as a Council Building or 'hub' in Barrhead. This facility will provide for and help meet the educational needs of the wider community.
- A family centre that will serve 0-5 year old customers and include training facilities and support for parents/ carers including health and welfare benefits information is under construction. You have consulted extensively with customers in the development of the service.
- You have refurbished some of your estate over the last year and this has included such as a school extension.
- You have continued to invest in sports facilities for both education and general use through the use of partnership working and funding.
- In speaking with parents it was clear that parental involvement is at a high level and you have parental involvement officers in each school. You have specific targets to engage with parents that are monitored and auctioned.
- A recent Care Inspectorate inspection of Integrated Children's Services highlighted good practice within the service.
- Staff spoken to discussed their career development and confirmed they felt well supported by the Department.
- In the past year, you have introduced a Family Friendly Accreditation scheme to all of your own local authority and partnership nurseries. You have developed, introduced, provided training about and monitored its effectiveness. This is reported on six monthly and part of your National Outcome agreement

## **Areas of Compliance Plus**

- 2.1.1 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 real attempts to engage with customers to determine their views on service provision and ensure that high levels of customer insight are maintained. Throughout the assessment 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.
- 2.1.2 You have used your extensive customer insight to inform policy and strategy and to prioritise service improvement activity. There are numerous examples of this within the Department. This included such as changes to the Sports and Leisure offering and increased nursery provision.

- 2.2.4 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.
- 3.2.1 You provide your customers with the information they need in ways which meet their needs and preferences, using a variety of appropriate channels. Examples of this include the growing use of social media such as facebook, twitter and Youtube. There is a further increase use of electronic media as a way of disseminating information which has been welcomed by customers. During the assessment a number of parents spoke favourably about the effective use of Twitter by Schools.
- 3.4.1 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. Examples include work with Colleges, private organisations and others to provide a wider, enhanced vocational programme for pupils. This continues to include such as work at The Style Academy and Rouken Glen where the Department works alongside other training and education providers.
- 4.3.4 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.
- 5.1.2 In the past year you have introduced a Family Friendly Accreditation scheme to all local authority and partnership nurseries. You have also developed, introduced, provided training about and monitored its effectiveness. You have further expanded your service quality standards to assure your customers of ongoing improvements to the quality of service offered by you and partners in delivering effective services to them.



## **7. ACTION PLANNING**

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The achievement of Customer Service Excellence is an on-going 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.

Your next steps:

### **Short Term Action Planning**

You should establish an action plan to ensure you meet the requirement of the standard identified as being partially-compliant in Section 5 of this report. Your assessor will review the actions taken to meet these partial compliances at your next annual visit.

### **On-going review**

It is a requirement of the Customer Service Excellence scheme that 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.