



Home Office

**Identity &
Passport Service**

REVIEW REPORT ON THE REGISTRATION SERVICE IN HALTON

**Local Government Delivery Partnership Unit
General Register Office
June 2010**

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INTRODUCTION

1

Background

1.1 The delivery and administration of civil registration is a partnership between local government and the General Register Office (part of the Identity and Passport Service). The Registrar General for England and Wales is Chief Executive of IPS. In 2007 registration officers became local authority employees. This, together with the creation of a new governance framework, provided local authorities with greater responsibility and opportunities to develop the delivery of local registration services. To date some 93 local authorities, including Halton, have adopted the new governance arrangements, and committed to the national Code of Practice / Good Practice Guide (GPG).

1.2 The GRO Delivery Partnership Unit (DPU) works with local authorities to review and improve service standards and to progress the modernisation of civil registration. The unit also seeks to identify innovation and good practice within the service and to encourage its wider dissemination. For local authorities that have adopted the new governance arrangements, a system of self reporting through the submission of an Annual Performance Report to GRO is in place. To supplement this, the unit also undertakes bespoke reviews, the scope of which is agreed with individual local authorities.

1.3 Halton adopted new governance arrangements in July 2007 and is now due for a programmed New Governance Review of registration services.

Terms of Reference

1.4 The details of the review process for Halton were agreed with the local authority at a meeting on the 29th April 2010. The terms of reference were:

1. To examine the technical proficiency of staff in relation to marriage activity and service attainment against related Good Practice Guide standards.
2. To examine the service's Key Performance Indicator monitoring systems and service attainment them.
3. To examine the customer journey whilst accessing the service and attainment against related Good Practice Guide standards.
4. To identify existing strengths and proffer recommendations for improvement.
5. To report on any other noteworthy issue, which is identified during the review.

INTRODUCTION

1 *continued*

Methodology

1.5 The review was conducted between 15th and 18th June 2010. The following methods were used during the course of the review:

- observation of attestation of marriage notices and delivery of ceremonies by the Superintendent Registrar, the associated administrative procedures, and the examination of marriage registration records and documents
- conducting of a ‘mystery shopping exercise’
- examination of service appointment diaries, performance monitoring systems and information and service organisation
- general observation of customers’ experience
- meetings with registration managers and other officers (including Contact Centre manager)
- examination of reports and records via the RON system

Acknowledgement

1.6 The DPU would like to extend its thanks to all those who contributed to this review.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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2.1 Observation of the Superintendent Registrar and other registration officers performing statutory duties revealed a very good standard of technical proficiency. The register office makes good use of electronic and manual recording systems which work well in monitoring service performance in respect of appointment availability, customer waiting times and certificate applications. Its attainment against Key Service Performance Indicators is good, meeting or exceeding all but two standards. Customer access to the registration service is excellent across the district with appointments readily available and additional service points providing convenient access. Initial customer contact via the council's contact centre works very well, although there is scope to extend its role and responsibilities in relation to the registration service. Staff display excellent customer care skills and a willingness to ensure that customers are fully informed and that all their needs are met.

Key Strengths

2.3 A number of strengths and good practice were identified in the areas inspected:

- (i) Multi-skilled staff for service resilience (*see paragraph 3.3*).
- (ii) Technical proficiency of staff is very good and ancillary tasks completed to good standard (*see paragraph 3.2*).
- (iii) Robust procedures for Approved Premise approvals (*see paragraph 3.7*).
- (iv) Appointment availability and in-office waiting times exceed national standards (*see paragraph 4.3 and 4.4*).
- (v) Same or next day service for certificate applications and credit/debit card payment facility (*see paragraph 4.5*).
- (vi) 100% satisfaction rate from recent survey – 97% overall (*see paragraph 4.6*).
- (vii) Good access to the service via corporate contact centre, additional service points at Widnes and Halton Lea (*see paragraph 5.8*).
- (viii) Excellent range of literature and information available on plasma screen in waiting area (*see paragraph 5.11*).

Key Recommendations

2.4 A number of key areas where action and development is required were also identified:

- (i) The date of birth should be shown in full on the reverse of the appropriate marriage authority when the age differs on ceremony day. Widow(er)s/surviving civil partners' cards should be submitted on the first Wednesday of each month. (*see paragraph 3.6*).
- (ii) Superintendent Registrar will follow up issue with Stopford electronic diary reporting system for in office waiting times. (*see paragraph 4.4*).
- (iii) The local authority to review scope for the contact centre to deal with a wider range of registration matters (*see paragraph 5.7*).
- (iv) The local authority will wish to ensure information published on Registration Service web-site is relevant and up to date and consider scope for additional services on-line (*see paragraph 5.12*).
- (v) The local authority will wish to consider scope for improving storage space for deposited registers in the strong room and non secure stock in the kitchen area. The location of the photocopy machine should also be reviewed (*see paragraphs 3.9 and 6.1*).

TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY OF STAFF – MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITY

3

Technical proficiency of the Superintendent Registrar

3.1. A separate report in respect of the technical proficiency of the new Superintendent Registrar has been issued personally to him and copied to the Proper Officer for Registration Matters.

Statutory standards

3.2 The following table summarises performance against statutory standards contained within the Good Practice Guide. For marriage & civil partnership activity, Halton is currently achieving 100% and for records, returns & certificates, the service is achieving 80%. A full analysis is provided at Appendix A and achievement against these standards is further discussed within the following paragraphs.

TABLE 1

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE SUMMARY TABLE				
Category	Number of Standards	Met	Not met	Attainment %
Marriage & civil partnership activity	8	8	0	100
Records, returns & certificates	5	4	1	80

General

3.3 There is an efficient team approach to working within the office. All registration officers are deputy superintendent registrars and deputies are regularly afforded the opportunity to undertake sufficient registration duties to maintain skill levels for their own development. This also provides added resilience for the service and contributes to a flexible, customer focussed ethos.

Marriage and Civil Partnership Notices

3.4 Halton is a small, compact service which offers marriage and civil partnership notice facilities at the register office in Runcorn and at Halton Direct Link in Widnes. Appointments for notices are transferred from the contact centre to the register office and are administered by registration staff via the 'Stopford' diary system. This provides performance information regarding notice appointment availability, which was found to be good.

3.5 Register office staff take great care around notice and ceremony administration and legality. A robust local numbering system is in place to assist with the administration of completed notices and details are recorded into a manual diary. We were informed that final checks of documents are carried out on a weekly basis, and at least one month in advance of the ceremonies, thus allowing sufficient time for a fresh notice to be taken in case of any issues arising. At the time of the review, current administrative paper-work was filed correctly and the RON task list was up-to-date, as were the number of notices on display.

Ceremonies

3.6 The superintendent registrar's office is the statutory ceremony room which is offered for the statutory fee of £40. The Boston Suite is also offered on Monday to Thursday for the same fee which rises to £80, £86 and £115 depending on the chosen ceremony day. We discussed how possible alterations to the ceremonies waiting area could provide enhanced interview facilities or a small additional ceremony suite. Provisional bookings are made up to two years in advance and the service provides pre-ceremony interviews for customers to finalise arrangements. Up to three teams are required to operate the ceremony programme during busy times of the year. Besides the team of six permanent staff, there are four casual officers who are called upon as necessary.

TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY OF STAFF – MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITY

3 (cont'd).

Registration of marriages and civil partnerships

3.7 DPU observations of four pre-marriage interviews and two marriage registrations revealed a very good standard of work for registration officers. Pre-marriage interviews are conducted according to requirements and registrations are not started until after couples exchange the ‘Declaratory and Contracting’ words. Examination of a sample of marriage register entries from July 2009 to June 2010 revealed that venues were correctly recorded and all Superintendent Registrars’ Certificates (authorities for marriage to proceed) were in order. However, when the age on the ceremony date differs to that given at the time of notice, we noted that deputies do not record the date of birth in full on the reverse of the authority (Superintendent Registrar’s Certificate) which was issued in respect of that party. Registration officers are also reminded of the requirement to prepare widow(er)s/surviving civil partners’ cards on remarriage. Examination of civil partnership formations from January 2010 – June 2010 confirmed 100% entered onto RON within two working days.

Approved Premises

3.8 Responsibility for the approval of new venues for ceremonies falls to the Superintendent Registrar. Although he has not had the opportunity to process a new application, we were advised that a pre-inspection meeting is arranged to explain procedures and resolve any queries prior to carrying out a formal inspection. Providing there are no issues, the approval is signed off by the Proper Officer. The Superintendent Registrar maintains the register of approvals and checks expiry dates. Reminders for renewals are raised six months prior to expiry of approval.

Records, Returns and Certificates

3.9 The register office submits all returns to the Registrar General in accordance with statutory requirements. Inspection of records storage facilities in the strong room against plans submitted to GRO confirmed that registers are stored securely. However, minor alterations to the plans were required and GRO has been notified. Additional issues were identified in respect of access and future capacity. These are discussed further in Chapter 6 and will need to be addressed by the local authority..

Strengths and Innovations	Areas for Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-skilled staff for service resilience. • All ancillary tasks completed to good standard. • Provisional ceremonies bookings taken up to two years in advance • Sessional ceremony staff appointed for busy periods • Robust procedures for Approved Premise approvals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy marriage registrars are reminded that when the age on the ceremony date differs to that given at the time of notice, the date of birth should be shown in full on the reverse of the appropriate marriage authority. • Widow(er)s/surviving civil partners’ cards should be submitted on the first Wednesday of each month. • The local authority will wish to address the issues of access and future capacity of the register office strong room

PERFORMANCE MONITORING SYSTEMS

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4.1 It is a requirement of new governance that local authorities provide the Registrar General with details of its annual performance against five key indicators contained within the national Good Practice Guide. The table below shows Halton's level of attainment for the 2009/10 business year.

TABLE 2

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS			
Key Indicators	Monitoring mechanisms in place	Standard attained	Performance rating
1. Events registered within statutory timeframe i) 98% of Births registered within 42 days ii) 98% of Still-births registered within 42 days iii) 95% of Deaths registered with 5 days.	Yes Data extracted from RON (GRO).	97% None registered 92%	Not met (1out of 34) None registered Not met
2. i) average waiting times for registration and notice taking. - Birth registration / declaration (3 days) - Still-birth registration / declaration (2 days) - Death registration / declaration (2 days) (all of above to standard of 95%). - Marriage / Civil Partnership Notice (to allow all ceremonies to proceed). ii) 90% of customers seen within 10 minutes of appointment time.	Yes Monthly customer surveys - manual diary maintained. Yes Manual recording at reception point.	100% 100% 100% 96% 99.7%	Met Appointments available and offered as required. Met
3. Certificate applications 95% of applications dealt with within 5 working days of receipt.	Yes Personal application forms dated. Other cases logged in and out.	100%	Met Certificates issued on same or next day.
4. 90% of customers satisfied (evidenced from response to customer satisfaction surveys and actual number of returned forms).	Yes Annual customer and stakeholder surveys.	97% customers satisfied (295 returns)	Met
5. Total number of formal complaints received (less than 0.5% as a % of all registrations).	Yes Corporate complaints system administered by LA.	Less than 0.1%.	Met One complaint received

KPI 1 Events registered within statutory timeframe

4.2 An analysis of registrations for 2009/10 shows that Halton narrowly missed the national standard with regard to the timely registration of births. Due to the small number of births registered in the district, this accounted for just one birth out of a total of 34. The standard achieved for deaths registered within the statutory period was 92% against the GPG national standard of 95%. RON data show that when incoming declarations and coroner's Part Bs are removed from the calculation, the attainment figure rises to 99%. The coroner's office either posts or faxes Part As and Bs to the register office and, at the same time, advises the next of kin to make an appointment to register the death. We were advised that the register office would make further contact with the next of kin if the death has not subsequently been registered within one day. We note that customers sometimes delay their attendance to register so that it is too late to effect a registration within 5 days, which is beyond the control of the registration service.

KPI 2 Average waiting times

4.3 The registration service utilises the Stopford electronic diary for performance data in respect of appointment availability. A registration officer is tasked with interrogating the system and analysing the data on a monthly basis. Reports generated from the electronic diary confirmed an excellent level of access to the service and the associated national standards are exceeded.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING SYSTEMS

4 (cont'd)

4.4 Halton has found a glitch in the Stopford performance reporting system in respect of in-office waiting times. A manual recording system is therefore currently maintained at the register office reception desk for monitoring this activity. Examination of daily records and monthly performance reports confirmed that 99.7% of customers are seen within 10 minutes, thus exceeding Good Practice Guide national standards. The issue of reporting in respect customers seen within 10 minutes, will be taken forward with the providers of Stopford by the Superintendent Registrar.

KPI 3 Certificate applications

4.5 Applications made by post, email (via contact centre), fax, in person or telephone are date-stamped with date of receipt. All personal application forms are similarly dated upon receipt and subsequently updated when issued. Payment for certificates may be made by cash, cheque, credit and debit card. Performance statistics in respect of certificate applications are collated by a registration officer and passed to the Superintendent Registrar on a monthly basis. The register office issues certificates in line with the local authority standard on the same or next day for current certificates and within 3 working days for family history. Figures show that the register office is providing an excellent service by achieving 100% against this target, thus exceeding the GPG standard of 90% issued within 5 working days.

KPI 4 Satisfied customers

4.6 A well established programme for the delivery of annual customer and stakeholder surveys is in place. The register office is assisted by the local authority's Research and Intelligence Group which analyses responses and produces outputs. The most recent survey was delivered in February 2010 resulting in 100% customers who responded being satisfied with the service. The overall customer satisfaction level for 2009/10 was 97%. Both sets of results exceed the GPG standard of 90%. Results are published in register office waiting area and are used to inform business planning.

Complaints

4.7 Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedures 'Any Comments or Complaints?' are in place on the local authority website and leaflets are available at the register office and all service points. Ongoing customer feedback is also encouraged with a 'post box' situated in the register office waiting area. The DPU was informed that only one formal complaint has been received in respect of the registration service during 2009/10.

Strengths and Innovations	Areas for Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appointment availability and in-office waiting times exceed national standards.• Same or next day service for certificate applications and 3 days for 'family history'.• 100% customer satisfaction rate from recent survey – 97% overall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Superintendent Registrar to follow up issue with Stopford electronic diary reporting system for in office waiting times.

CUSTOMER ACCESS TO THE SERVICE

5

General

5.1 This chapter provides information regarding the customer journey within Halton and Table 3 summarises service performance against the associated non-statutory Customer Service Standards contained within the Good Practice Guide. A full analysis is provided at Appendices B & C.

TABLE 3

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE SUMMARY TABLE					
Category	Number of Standards	Fully Attained	Mostly Attained	Partly Attained	Not Attained
Customer service	8	6	1	1	0

Customer Care

5.2 Registration staff were found to be professional and knowledgeable and delivering the highest standard of customer care. Staff collected customers from the waiting area and returned them to the exit following business. They were courteous and polite throughout and meticulous in confirming customer understanding of the registration process.

Registration Service points

5.3 In addition to the register office at Runcorn, there is a facility for births, deaths and marriages at Halton Direct, Widnes and for birth registrations and declarations at Halton Lea.

Initial Contact – Contact Centre

5.4 Calls to the advertised telephone number for registration services are routed to the council's contact centre, Halton Direct Link. It is available for all local authority enquires, including registration, on a 24 hour basis, 7 days per week. Operators handle a basic range of calls which include taking certificate applications from customers who wish to apply by phone and providing appointments for the registration of births and for deaths which have not been referred to the coroner. All other enquiries are referred to the register office or other appropriate agencies. Operators at Halton Direct Link organise response to any emergency access requirement outside office open hours by offering one of two 'Emergency Out of Hours' mobile telephone numbers. The Registration Service website is also used by some customers to make initial enquiries by email via the website link.

5.5 Customer service operators have each received one day's training on the electronic 'procedural flows' for registration which are built into the local authority's Customer Relationship Management System 'Solidus'. Monthly quality control procedures are in place whereby team leaders review operators' call recordings. As part of this review, the DPU undertook a 'Mystery Shopping' exercise during which a number of registration scenarios were put to operators and register office staff. Results ranged between good and excellent, and beyond that, mystery callers were dealt with promptly and referred on to experienced registration staff as appropriate. Although no formal Service Level Agreement is in place, the Superintendent Registrar and the contact centre manager meet on a regular basis to discuss performance issues.

5.6 Customers calling the contact centre are answered by an operator, or placed in a queue if all operators are engaged. The 'Solidus' system provides a range of contact centre performance information. Latest reports for May 2010 show that the contact centre is meeting the corporate standard of 100% of calls answered within 30 seconds. Local authority customer survey results revealed that 97% of customers were satisfied with the service received when making an appointment via the contact centre.

CUSTOMER ACCESS TO THE SERVICE

5 (cont'd)

5.7 Overall, whilst the contact centre operates well enough, it could be utilised further to enhance the service to the customer and reduce the telephone contact with the Register Office which currently occurs. Some similar services across England and Wales administer most appointments; provide more information and deal with a broader range of registration enquiries. It is recommended that the local authority consider scope for the contact centre to deal with a wider range of registration matters (e.g. the allocation of all death appointments and basic marriage notice appointments), in keeping with similar practice throughout the service.

Opening hours

5.8 Appointments at the register office are offered between 09:30–13:00 and 14:00-16:30. Widnes appointments are offered on three mornings per week and Halton Lea Runcorn on one morning per week. Saturday morning appointments are offered 'By Appointment'. 100% of respondent customers who were surveyed in February 2010 agreed that this is an acceptable level of accessibility to Halton's registration services.

Accommodation, Access and Facilities

5.9 The register office is located in the Town Hall at Runcorn and we note that there is access for disabled or wheelchair-bound customers via the main entrance. There are disabled toilet facilities as well as baby-changing facilities. A hearing loop, to assist the hard of hearing, is installed within the ceremony room and a portable device is available for use in all private offices.

Appointments

5.10 Thirty minutes are allowed for each birth, death and notice appointment. Forty-five minutes are allowed for all ceremonies. Customers arriving without an appointment are accommodated as quickly as possible or offered an appointment at their convenience.

Customer Information and Literature

5.11 Staff provide sound advice and information to customers. A range of literature is displayed in the register office waiting room and appropriate literature is offered to customers when registering births and deaths and attesting notices. A plasma screen is situated in the main waiting area which displays legislative information and local advertisements. A second screen is planned for displaying marriage notices. There are leaflets promoting the Service's non statutory ceremonies, produced to the corporate standard and the marriage brochure 'Our Celebration' is currently being reviewed.

Registration Service website

5.12 The pages dedicated to the registration service on the local authority website provide a good range of information and contact details. However, some information needs updating and there is no facility to download certificate application forms or order certificates on-line. The local authority will wish to review the scope to utilise the website to offer customers remote access to services such as certificate ordering. The site has links to other useful sites such as 'GRO' and Cheshire BMD.

Strengths and Innovations	Areas for Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good access to the service via contact centre, additional service points at Widnes and Halton Lea• Excellent range of informative literature available• Plasma screen to display additional information• Good responses in respect of mystery shopping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The local authority to review scope for the contact centre to deal with a wider range of registration matters• The local authority will wish to ensure information published on Registration Service web-site is relevant and up to date and consider scope for additional services on-line.

OTHER ISSUES

6

Register Office Strong room

6.1 The register office strong room can only be accessed via the Superintendent Registrar's office, thus customer interviews are disrupted if an original register is urgently required. We also note that a waste-pipe is located in the ceiling and that the strong room has reached its capacity for the storage of completed registers and unused security stock. These issues will need to be addressed. Due to shortage of space, we also note the necessity to store stationery and non-secure stock within the kitchen area of the premises, and that the photocopy machine is situated in the corridor to the kitchen. We were informed that this constitutes part of a fire exit route.

Areas for development

- The local authority will wish to consider scope for improving storage space for deposited registers in the strong room and for non-secure stock in the kitchen area. The location of the photocopy machine should also be reviewed.

APPENDIX

A GPG ASSESSMENT OF STATUTORY STANDARDS

Marriage and civil partnership activity		
Task & Statutory Requirement	National Standard	Findings
Taking notices of marriage or Civil Partnership to allow event to take place as planned.	Couples able to give notice in time to allow the marriage or civil partnership to take place as planned	Met
Accurate completion and processing of notices in accordance with legal requirements.	Preliminaries to Marriage and Civil Partnership completed in accordance with legal requirements.	Met
For ceremonies, the provision of a room within the register office to accommodate the couple and two guests for statutory fee.	Room identified on plan approved by the RG. Couples offered choice of words of declaration and contract provided for in legislation	Met
Marriages registered immediately following the event.	Marriages accurately recorded after immediately after event.	Met
Civil Partnerships recorded onto RON within 2 working days of formation.	Civil Partnerships recorded onto RON within 2 working days of the formation.	Met
Approved premises applications processed in accordance with Marriages and Civil Partnerships (AP) Regulations 2005	Procedures in place for approval process to be managed.	Met
Local authority maintains the Approved Premises register	Controls in place to manage the expiry and renewal of licences	Met
Suspected sham marriages or civil partnerships reported to Home Office	All returns made in accordance with statutory requirements and timescales	Met

Records, returns and certificates		
Task & Statutory Requirement	National Standard	Findings
Quarterly copies certified and submitted to RG within 28 days of the end of the relevant quarter.	All returns made in accordance with statutory requirements and timescales	Met
Occasional copies of corrected entries not on RON submitted within 7 days of correction	All returns made in accordance with statutory requirements and timescales	Met
Registers to be kept in repository approved by the Registrar General	Registers stored to prevent deterioration and in secure and accessible location.	Not met
Index to be prepared and made publicly available for deposited registration records	Provide public access to indexes on request.	Met
Certificates from entries in deposited registers issued in response to application (KPI 3)	95% of applications dealt with within 5 working days of application being received.	Met

APPENDIX

B GPG ASSESSMENT OF NON-STATUTORY STANDARDS

1. Customer service	
Key Activity & National Standards	Level of attainment and comments
Customer Satisfaction (KPI 4) 90% customer satisfaction level. Surveys undertaken to cover satisfaction with service access and availability; areas of service delivery dissatisfaction identified and acted upon; results published	Fully Met Recent customer survey results showed 97% customer satisfaction with service. Results published and displayed in register office waiting area.
Compliments and Complaints (KPI 5) Formal complaints received to be less than 0.5% of registration activities; clear, visual Compliments and Complaints policy in place; results published annually.	Fully Met Only one formal complaint received during 2009/10 (less than 0.1%). 'Any comments or complaints?' leaflets available at service points (also includes compliments).
Consultation Public views used to inform Service Delivery Plan; public/staff consultation strategy in place and reviewed.	Fully Met Annual consultation strategy in place which is used to inform SDP.
On arrival - waiting times (KPI 2b) <i>Those offices with appointment systems</i> 90% of customers seen within 10 minutes of appointment time. Seen on arrival, on time or earlier.	Fully Met 99.7% customers seen within 10 minutes of appointment time.
Waiting Times for Appointments for; Birth registration/declaration (3 days) Still-births registration/declaration (2 days) Death registration/declaration (2 days) Marriage and civil partnership notice (to allow ceremony to proceed) Customers without an appointment.	Fully Met Appointments available in line with GPG standards. Customers who turn up without an appointment are seen as quickly as possible or offered an appointment at their convenience.
Information about Services provided Available for statutory and non-statutory functions; in corporate format and obtainable at appropriate outlets; reviewed on a regular basis	Fully Met Full range of informative material on display. Corporate format for non-statutory services. Brochures and leaflets under regular review.
e-facilities Up to date and informative web site; credit/debit card payment facilities; e-appointment booking system in place	Partly Met Not all information displayed on website is up to date, no on-line facilities for certificate applications or appointments.
Engagement with customers and key partners External partners identified and engaged with; account taken of feedback/comments; Elected members involved	Mostly Met Regular surveys undertaken (latest February 2010) on full range of services - response rate was 43%. No elected member involvement.

APPENDIX

C CUSTOMER ACCESS TO THE SERVICE

As part of the inspection process an assessment was made on the “customer journey”.

1. How easy is it for the customer to make contact with the registration service?

Contact number accessed:	via website	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	other council offices	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	stakeholder establishments	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	local directories	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
First point of contact	Direct to register office (registration office)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(by telephone)	Direct to register office (reception point)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Direct to Contact Centre	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Emergency contact number in operation		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Via contact centre
<u>Comment:</u> A mystery shopping exercise revealed that telephone calls were answered immediately. Emergency contact numbers are provided by contact centre operators.			

2. How easy is it for the customer to access the registration service?

Convenient central location of register office	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Additional service points within registration district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Good public transport links in place	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Opening hours in line with other corporate services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Extended opening hours in operation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Lunchtime opening in operation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<u>Comment:</u> Service points at the Runcorn, Widnes and Halton Lea. Contact centre operating with 24/7 service. No extended opening hours in operation – recent customer survey 100% satisfaction with access.		

3. How easy is it for the customer to locate and access the register office?

Good signage in place (street sign to RO <u>and</u> signs indicating location of RO)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Within Town Hall complex.
On-site car parking/cycle area/disabled bays	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Car park on site at RO. Facility for disabled.
Drop-off points (for bridal cars)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Direct access (office at street level with no steps or other barriers)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
At point of entry to building, access arrangements for disabled customers in place	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Reception point in place to greet/direct customers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<u>Comment:</u> Disabled access at front of building – push-button access to gain entry.		

4. How easy is it for customers to conduct their business quickly?

Waiting time for an appointment meets national standards (all events)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Waiting time from arrival to registration meets national standards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Walk-in provision available	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<u>Comment:</u> GPG standards applied to appointment availability and customer waiting times. Walk-in customers are seen without delay or offered an appointment at their convenience.		

APPENDIX

C continued

5. Is there good information about the registration service available to the customer?		
Wide selection of statutory notices, booklets and leaflets within public areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Wide selection of local information within public areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Use of IT to convey information (e.g. plasma screen) within public areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Easy access to registration services on website	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
All information on website is up to date <u>and</u> relevant	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amendments required.
Promotional material in place (e.g. marriage brochure)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Compliments and complaints policy in place <u>and</u> visible to customers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Service standards/targets publicised	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<u>Comment:</u> Comprehensive Ceremony Guide and wide range of literature and information is available within the public waiting areas, including Comments, Complaints and Compliments procedures. Targets in respect of service standards are also published. Registration pages on website require updating and enhancing.		
6. What facilities and enhancements are available for customers at the register office?		
Garden area	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3 gardens within grounds
Good backdrop for photo opportunities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Statutory ceremony room (meeting national standard)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SR's office
Decommissioned rooms	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Waiting areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Separate waiting areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Quiet room available for distressed informants	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Baby changing facilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Public toilets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Public telephone	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Children's play area	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Water dispenser/Drinks dispenser	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Mobility provisions for disabled customers (e.g. ramps, wide doors, lower counter)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Visual provisions for disabled customers (e.g. Braille, large signs)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Aural provisions for disabled customers (e.g. hearing loop, microphone)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Disabled washroom facilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Rooms: clean and tidy/room for business to be conducted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Wide range of choice with regard enhancements at ceremonies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Payment by credit/debit card	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Special arrangements for still-birth/neo natal death arrangements	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Home registrations	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Partnership working with associated groups (e.g. bereavement)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Wedding publication		
<u>Comment:</u> Well maintained gardens offer ideal photo opportunities for ceremonies. A hearing loop is installed within the ceremony room and a portable device is available for use at the reception area and in private offices. No provision for on-line payments for services.		

APPENDIX

C *continued*

7. Is there a good range of other services available to the public?	
Private citizenship ceremonies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Baby naming ceremonies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Re-affirmation of vows	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Civil Funerals	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nationality Checking Service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<u>Comment:</u> Excellent choice of non-statutory ceremonies as well as NCS available.	

8. How did staff engage with the public?	
Confidentiality respected at all times	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Understanding needs of customer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Clear and concise explanation of procedures etc	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Good explanation of certificates and forms	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Showed sympathy/empathy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Receptive to questions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Professional outlook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<u>Comment:</u> Staff offer a high standard of service throughout all points of contact and look to promote good customer care at all times.	

APPENDIX

D DISTRICT PROFILE

Demographic

Governance	Unitary Council
Formation	1998 (Local Government Re-organisation)
Population	119,800 (mid 2008 estimates)
Size	79.09 square kilometres
Region	North West
Main hospitals	None

Access and facilities

Location of Register Office and Registration Service Points	Opening hours
Register Office Town Hall Heath Road Runcorn WA7 5TN	SR- Mon.-Fri.09:30-13:00 & 14:00-16:30 (except Wed. pm) SD/1- Mon-Fri. 09:30-13:00 & 14:00-16:30 (except Thurs.am)
Widnes Halton Direct Link 7, Brook Street, Widnes	S/D1- Mon, Wed. and Fri. 09:30-12:30.
Halton Direct Link Halton Lea, Runcorn	S/D1- Thurs. 09:30-12:30
Car parking	Register Office, Runcorn Town Hall
Gardens	Runcorn Town Hall
Ceremony Rooms	SR office. De-commissioned Ceremony Room at the Register Office.
Approved Premises	8
Designated RO	No

Business Volumes 2009/10

Births	34	Marriages	276
Deaths	517	Civil Partnerships	8
Birth Declarations	1178	Certificates issued	1,563
Death Declarations	-	New Citizens	71
Still-births	-	Citizenship Ceremonies	29
Marriage Notices	819		

Staffing profile (core staff)

Statutory post-holders	
SR (1)	
RBD/DSR (1)	
Additional staff	
Senior Registration Officer (1)	
Deputy Registrars of Births & Deaths (2)	
Registration Assistant (1)	
Sessional staff (4)	