



Appendix C

Health & Partnerships

Halton Registration District

Service Delivery and Improvement Plan

April 2007 to March 2008

Contents

	Page
1.0 Introduction	2
2.0 Team Profile / Locations / Service Access	3
3.0 Link to Service Plan	6
4.0 Service Developments	7
5.0 Resources	10
6.0 Service Performance	11
7.0 Performance Monitoring	14

1.0 INTRODUCTION

To meet Halton's most pressing needs, the Borough Council has identified **6 key priorities**, which, as detailed within the Council's Corporate Plan, are: -

- **A Healthy Halton**
- **Halton's Urban Renewal**
- **Halton's Children & Young People**
- **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**
- **A Safer Halton**
- **Corporate Effectiveness & Business Efficiency**

The primary purpose of this Service Delivery and Improvement Plan is to provide a clear statement on what the Halton Registration Service is planning to achieve over the forthcoming twelve months and to show how this contributes towards achieving the Service aims and corporate priorities of the Council.

2.0 TEAM PROFILE

2.1 Team Composition

The Registration Service Team comprises six posts, as follows:

- One Registration Service Manager / Superintendent Registrar (statutory officer)
- One Senior Registration Officer / Registrar of Births and Deaths (statutory officer)
- One Senior Registration Officer
- Two Registration Officers
- One Registration Assistant

In addition to the permanent staff detailed above, the Service has appointed 2 casual (sessional) Senior Civil Ceremonies Celebrants who are also Deputy SRs / Deputy RBDs, plus 4 casual (sessional) Civil Ceremonies Celebrants, who are also Deputy RBDs.

The Registration Service provides the public with a comprehensive service for registering births, still births and deaths as prescribed by the Birth and Death Registration Act 1953.

It provides for the correct and lawful conduct and registration of civil marriages both in the Register Office and in various approved buildings in the Borough, and for the attestation of notices of marriage for all non-conformist churches, as prescribed by the Marriage Act 1949.

The Service has operational responsibility for the delivery, and related duties, of civil partnership registrations as laid down in the Civil Partnership Act 2004.

It administers the Council's function of approving suitable premises as venues for civil marriage under the Marriage Act 1994.

It maintains birth, death and marriage records from 1837 and issues certified copies of these records on request. Advice and assistance is given to those persons interested in genealogy.

Under the Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, it is responsible for the provision of Citizenship Ceremonies for all applicants living in the Borough, who have been granted British Citizenship.

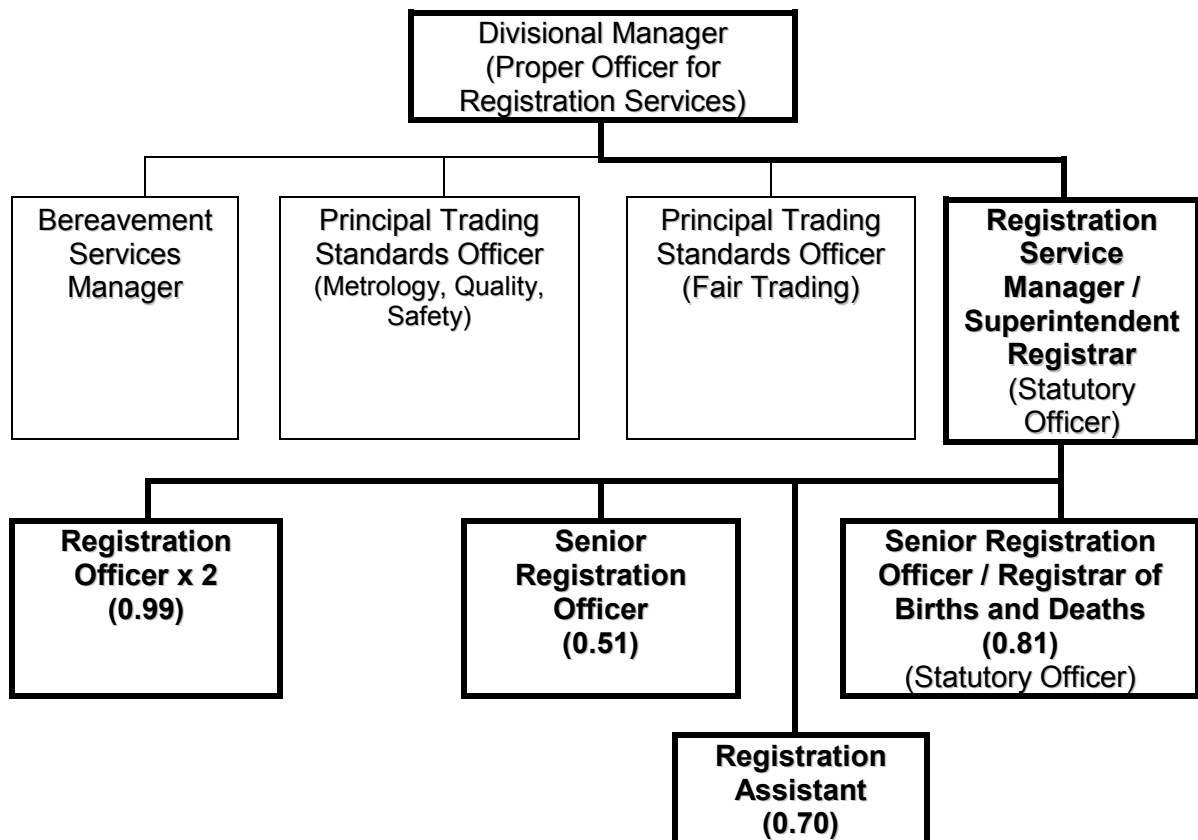
The Registration Service works in partnership with external bodies, for example HM Coroner, doctors' surgeries, the hospital, funeral directors, the Clergy, the Area Health Authority and the Home Office. In addition it works with the Council Tax Section, Bereavement Services and Environmental Health Division of the Council. A registrar attends both HDL offices in Widnes and Halton Lea to register births and deaths.

2.2 Organisation Structure

The Registration Service Act 1953, as amended by the Local Government Act 1972, under which England and Wales is divided into registration districts, governs the Service. The boundaries of these are determined by registration schemes made under the Act and approved by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (see 2.3 below).

The Divisional Manager for Consumer Protection is the Proper Officer for the District and has a statutory responsibility for overseeing the running of the Service.

The two statutory officers have an individual and personal responsibility for every registration they carry out.



Excluding the Divisional Manager post shown in the above organisation structure, the full-time equivalent team roles are as follows:

Managerial	1
Professional / Technical	2.31
Administrative / clerical	0.70

2.3 Boundaries and Locations

The Registration District of Halton comprises one district that covers the local authority area encompassed by the Borough of Halton. This includes the parishes of Hale and Daresbury. The Registration Sub-district of Halton covers the same area.

The Register Office and head office is located at the Town Hall, Heath Road, Runcorn. Additional service delivery points are provided at Halton Direct Link offices at Widnes and Halton Lea, Runcorn.

2.4 Service Access

The Register Office is open between 9.30 am – 1.00 pm and between 2.00 pm – 4.30 pm on weekdays and by appointment on Saturday mornings.

The Head Office is open between 9.30 am – 1.00 pm and 2.00 pm – 4.30 pm on weekdays with the exception of Thursday morning, when the service is available at Halton Direct Link, Halton Lea.

In addition, the service is available at Halton Direct Link, Widnes on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings between 9.30 am and 12.30 pm.

The Service has an arrangement with the Contact Centre (which is staffed 24/7) to route any emergency calls to a member of the Registration staff.

3.0 LINK TO SERVICE PLAN

The Council has identified six key strategic priorities that are detailed within the introduction of this plan. Whilst the majority of Council services will contribute in some way to each of these priorities, those that are most relevant to the Registration Service, and the relevant areas of focus that flow from the particular key priorities, are shown below. The Service Aims that flow from the key priorities/areas of focus are taken from the Health & Partnerships Departmental Service Plan covering the period 2007 to 2010, whilst the Registration Service aims for 2007/2008 are listed below as Unit Aims.

Corporate Priority 6

Corporate Effectiveness and Business Efficiency

Area of Focus 38

Building on our customer focus by improving communication, involving more service users in the design and delivery of services, and ensuring equality of access.

Service Aim

SA10 To ensure local people receive an excellent and well-informed service, with improved choice and greater flexibility in the range of services provided.

Unit Aims

UA1 To provide an open and accountable Service that is responsive to individual and collective local needs, is committed to customer care and excellence in public service, and that exceeds its declared performance standards.

UA2 Identify and implement improvements to the Service highlighted by customer comments when surveyed.

UA3 Develop and improve the choices and flexibility provided by the Registration Service.

4.0 SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS

4.1 Completed Review Work

The Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board has considered and supported the Service's pursuance of new governance arrangements at the earliest opportunity. Such arrangements provide for a more flexible, less prescriptive registration scheme covering the management and delivery of the local Registration Service. This will provide the Council with greater discretion to deliver a local service that both meets national standards and local community needs.

Additionally during 2006/2007, the Policy and Performance Board was informed of registration modernisation developments via the wider departmental quarterly monitoring reports. Issues included the employment status of statutory officers and the launch of the Good Practice Guide for Registration Services.

The Service carries out a number of surveys over a three-year period, targeting various customer groups and partners. Couples marrying during September 2006 were surveyed and as a result of feedback received from that survey the Service is exploring a suggestion to provide an improved keepsake version of the marriage ceremony brochure. Customers visiting the Service during a week in February 07 were surveyed on customer satisfaction, service standards and access to services. Feedback received has not yet been analysed.

The whole of the Registration team were consulted on plans to pursue a new governance scheme change in February 2007, as required under Section 14(4) of the Registration Service Act.

During December 2005 the Registration Service was the subject of an internal audit. The auditor concluded that the control environment was adequately designed and established controls were consistently applied. The report action plan contained five recommendations, all of which were implemented during 2006. This was confirmed via a follow-up internal audit conducted in January 2007.

In the latter half of 2006, the Service appointed two casual (sessional) Senior Civil Ceremonies Celebrants who are also Deputy SRs / Deputy RBDs, plus four casual (sessional) Civil Ceremonies Celebrants, who are also Deputy RBDs. These appointments are aimed at increasing flexibility and efficiency, particularly with regard to meeting customer needs.

In December 2006, Service managers met with HM Inspectors of Registration so that they could assess the Service's preparedness to pursue a new governance scheme change. Subject to the completion of certain specific, planned actions, the Inspectors concluded that Halton was well prepared to take this forward.

In addition, one member of staff received an individual inspection of their statutory duties and customer care skills as part of the normal inspection regime. This officer was assessed with an overall efficiency/standard of 'A'.

Halton is part of the North West Registration Managers Group. As part of this group, staffing, numbers of activities performed and financial data are submitted annually for comparison with other registration districts, initially in the North West, but subsequently over England and Wales. Ten NW districts submitted data in 2004-05. The results showed that the gross cost per head of population (£1.91) was in line with the majority. Data for 2005-06 has been submitted and will be analysed during 2007/08.

Whilst the Service's Charter Mark award has lapsed, the Service has maintained its Charter Mark infrastructure to support its customer-focussed service delivery ethos. The Service benefits from the Council-wide Investor in People status.

4.2 On-going Review Work

As indicated earlier, the feedback from a survey of customers visiting the Service during a week in February 07 has yet to be analysed.

General Service developments linked to the pursuance of new governance arrangements are on-going.

4.3 Planned Review Work

During 2007/2008 P & P Board scrutiny activity is likely to focus on the Service's performance against the Good Practice Guide national standards, changes to the employment status of the statutory officers and the annual stewardship return that must be submitted to the Registrar General as part of the new governance arrangements.

Each year the Service conducts two postal surveys of its customers to gain feedback on the quality of service provision and information on other aspects of the Service. There is a general survey of all customers visiting the office during one particular week, and a survey of all couples marrying during a month. Emphasis will be placed on the availability of the service and the increased choices for marriage, naming ceremonies and re-affirmation of vows.

The Civil Partnerships Act has been in operation for 12 months. Couples who have registered a civil partnership in Halton during 2006 will be consulted to ascertain their views on the service provided and the content and choices of the ceremony offered.

The move to web-based registrations of births and deaths will have an impact on the Service as registration staff will be able to make two or more registrations at the same time (whereas they were previously restricted by the availability of a limited number of registers. Customer surveys will be used to analyse customer needs.

The Service may take a slot in a Halton 2000 panel survey during the year, in order to assess the public's perception on certain specific aspects of Registration Service delivery.

HM Inspectors of Registration will maintain contact with the Service during the year, to ensure that the new governance arrangements operate smoothly following the scheme change.

The Service will take part in the NW benchmarking group exercise during 2007/2008.

5.0 RESOURCES

5.1 Budget Summary

Council budgets will be agreed in March 2006, following which the Service's budget will be published. No significant changes are expected for 2007/2008 and no changes are anticipated with regard to staffing, ICT or accommodation compared to last year.

5.2 Future ICT Requirements

In order to produce copy certificates locally, the transfer of registration data to a standard, proprietary Microsoft database would be necessary on the cessation of the present Registration Service software. The Register Office would also benefit from access to a suitable document scanner in order to provide copy certificates.

The Service is to research electronic diary options with a view to installing a system that will provide Service performance data. In addition, the installation of a web-cam in the ceremonies room is being considered.

5.3 Future Accommodation/Property Requirements

The Register Office is located in Runcorn Town Hall and comprises a ceremonies room, public reception areas and two offices. It includes secure storage for registers of births, marriages and deaths together with related paperwork. It is unlikely that there will be a change in accommodation needs in the next twelve months. However, office accommodation for the team is tight.

6.0 SERVICE PERFORMANCE

Plans are no use if they do not produce real results. We need to set targets and measure our performance to know if we are achieving the improvements intended. Various types of indicator are used here to do this:

- **Objectives.** These show the major events in the work of the Team that are planned to take place during 2007–08, such as the launch of new initiatives, production of key plans and strategies and progress on major projects†
- **Performance Indicators and Targets.** These show performance on indicators that are prescribed by central Government as part of their drive to ensure that councils deliver best value in serving their local communities.

† Against each key objective the overall residual risk assessment (after the risk control measures have been identified) is shown in a column headed 'RISK SCORE'. The risk mapping exercise scores the potential impact on the key objective (severity) and the likelihood (probability) of the risks happening to arrive at a number. This is represented by a number with the associated level of assessed risk.

Risk Score	Overall Level of Risk
1 – 4	LOW
5 – 10	MEDIUM
11 – 16	HIGH

6.1 Objectives 2007/08

Attached at Appendix 1 is a table outlining the team's objectives and how these link into the Department's Service Aims.

6.2 Performance Indicators and Targets

Attached at Appendix 2 is a table outlining all the statutory indicators and local non-statutory indicators that will be monitored via the team.

6.3 Risk Control Measures

None of the key objectives outlined in the departmental Service Plan, that relate to and fall within the direct control of the team, were initially assessed as 'medium' risk (or above) on the corporate risk assessment register. Hence, there are no risk control measures that the Registration Team would be required to monitor (in accordance with Council procedures).

6.4 Equality Action Plan

Halton Council is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and combating discrimination and victimisation within all aspects of its service delivery, policy development and as an employer. This commitment is reflected in a range of policies, strategies and framework documents that underpin the work of the Council in its day-to-day operation and in the services it delivers.

The Council fully supports the broad principles of social justice and will oppose any form of discrimination and oppression. Council policy will apply to all of those who come into contact with it, i.e. those who presently use directly provided services of services provided on the Council's behalf; potential users of services; other agencies and professional; employees and job applicants; and the general public.

During the course of 2006 – 07 all Council Services conducted Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to examine the equality implications of all policies, procedures and practices within their area.

EIAs continue to be completed on all new/revised policies, procedures and practices within the Directorate to ensure they eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations between racial groups. Where specific actions are identified then progress of these will be monitored by the Directorate Equal Opportunities Working Group.

None of the actions from equality impact/needs assessments undertaken during 2006/2007 that fall within the direct control of the team, were initially regarded as 'medium' priority (or above) within the impact/needs assessments. Hence there are no specific initiatives or actions that the Registration Team would be required to monitor (in accordance with Council procedures).

6.5 Level of Service

Halton Borough Council is committed at all times to meeting the national standards of service as outlined in the GRO/LACORS Good Practice Guide for Registration Services. For certain aspects of the Service these minimum standards are exceeded and the Service meets the "Good Practice" or "Better Practice" criteria.

Details of the level of service met for each of the criteria addressed by the guide, together with proposed service (including customer service) improvements planned for the year ahead, can be found in Appendix 3 of this plan.

6.6 Suggestions and Complaints Procedure

The Council's clear procedure for dealing with complaints applies to the Registration Service. The Council is fully committed to respond fully to a complaint within 14 days. In addition, as part of the Registration Service's

standards, the Service pledges that an initial written response will be given within 5 working days.

The procedure is described in the leaflet “Any Complaints” which is available at the Register Office and all Council offices and Halton Direct Links.

A notice in the Register Office informs members of the public about the complaints procedure asking them in the first instance to contact the Superintendent Registrar.

The Register Office has not received any official complaints during the last 15 years.

Customers are regularly asked in surveys if they are aware of the Council’s complaints procedure. During the period 2002 – 2005, an average of 60% said that they were not aware. However, an average of 94.7% said they would feel able to complain if necessary.

In addition, customer feedback forms are available at all offices to allow users to comment on any aspect of the service. Staff write or telephone those users who have given contact information. Users of the Service are also asked as part of the customer surveys, if they have any suggestions for improvements to the Service.

The Service logs all informal complaints and suggestions, however they are made, including those on feedback forms. These are discussed and analysed, and a summary of suggestions and the actions that have been taken, is published in waiting rooms and in customer surveys.

6.7 Business Continuity Plan

The aim of business continuity planning is to ensure continuity of service delivery following an unexpected disruption to normal working.

The Health & Community Directorate produced its Business Continuity Plan in 2006 and work is currently taking place on updating the plan. For further details, please refer to the Directorate Business Continuity Plan.

The Business/Service continuity plan for the Halton Registration Service is attached at Appendix 4.

7.0 PERFORMANCE REPORTING

One of the main purposes of having a Service Delivery and Improvement Plan is to enable Service managers to keep track of how the team is doing and to see whether the team is performing as planned and achieving its targets.

Progress will be monitored through:

- Weekly / daily monitoring by the Proper Officer and Registration Service Manager through their regular interaction with team officers
- The production of monthly statistical information which is considered by managers and by all officers at monthly team briefings
- Quarterly progress reports to Departmental Management Team meetings

6.1 Objectives (2007/08)

Service Plan Aims <i>(Reference only)</i>	Divisional Objective		Milestones		Monitoring Frequency	Responsible Officer
	Ref	Description	Actions needed to achieve the objective	Target / Deadlines		
SA10	RO1	Adopt new governance arrangements for the Halton Registration Service	Secure the installation of a new Registration Scheme which must be signed and sealed by the Council and the Minister	4 July 07	Monthly	J Downes
SA10	RO2	Prepare historical index of marriages, 1926 - 1930	Input data	31 Oct 07	2-Monthly	Y Macleod
			Check index	31 Jan 08	2-Monthly	Y Macleod
			Arrange binding	31 Mar 08	Feb 2008	Y Macleod
SA10	RO3	Survey customers to ascertain their views on quality and scope of services provided	Survey all couples marrying in Aug 07	31 Aug 07	3-Monthly	J Eager
			Survey clients during 1 week in Feb 08	29 Feb 08	3-Monthly	J Eager
			Analyse results of calendar year surveys	30 Nov 07	3-Monthly	J Eager
			Determine the resultant service Improvements that are to be introduced	31 Dec 07	Monthly	J Downes / S Jones
			Implement service improvements flowing from above analysis	31 Mar 08	3-Monthly	J Downes / S Jones

6.2 Performance Indicators and Targets

Service Plan Aims	Performance Indicator			2006/07			2007/08 Target	Monitoring Frequency	Responsible Officer
				Actual	Target	Achieved / not achieved			
(Reference only)	Category	Ref	Description						
SA10	Service Delivery	RP 1	Submit occasional copies of corrected entries within 7 days of correction being made – (these are amended copies forwarded to the GRO to replace the original copy of a register entry	New PI	New PI	New PI	100%	Monthly	S Jones
SA10	Service Delivery	RP 2	Complete weekly Health Authority returns (of number of deaths occurring within the Borough) within 7 days –	New PI	New PI	New PI	100%	Monthly	S Jones
SA10	Service Delivery	RP 3	% of times birth registration / declaration informant offered appointment within 3 working days	New PI	New PI	New PI	90%	Monthly	S Jones
SA10	Service Delivery	RP 4	% of times still birth registration / declaration informant offered appointment within 2 working days	New PI	New PI	New PI	90%	Monthly	S Jones
SA10	Service Delivery	RP 5	% of times death registration / declaration informant offered appointment within 2 working days	New PI	New PI	New PI	90%	Monthly	S Jones
SA10	Service Delivery	RP 6	% of times marriage / civil partnership notice informant offered appointment within 5 working days	New PI	New PI	New PI	90%	Monthly	S Jones