

Assessment Report

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the assessment, Hampshire County Council – Governor Services 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.

The outcome of the assessment was -

“Renewal of the Customer Service Excellence Standard has been recommended”

Address:	Clarendon House, Monarch Way, Winchester SO22 5PW		
Standard(s):	Customer Service Excellence	Accreditation Body(s)	UKAS
Representative:	Bob West		
Site(s) assessed:	Falcon House Monarch Way, Winchester SO22 5PW	Date(s) of audit(s):	17-11-2016, 18-11- 2016
Lead Assessor :	John Thurgood	Additional team member(s):	None
Type of Assessment:	Renewal		
Review of Certification Claims	Claims are accurate and in accordance with SGS guidance		

2. CONTEXT

Hampshire County Council Governor Services provides recruitment, information, advice, support and training services to governance bodies (for schools and education centres) and their clerks to enable them to fulfill their responsibilities effectively.

They support the work of 6500 governors, board members and education centre management committee members in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. These people play a crucial role in the effective management of educational establishments, representing the interests of the general public in the way they are run and the outcomes pupils and children achieve. All governors are volunteers from a variety of backgrounds working together with the head teachers and to make strategic decisions affecting the lives of more than 200,000 children and young people attending provision in Hampshire. They need to have an informed, independent view on a wide range of educational issues in order to support and challenge paid educational professionals in achieving the fulfilment of their main roles and responsibilities. They also need the specific skills of contributing to the appointment of staff, managing the school budget and dealing with complaints from parents. Governor Service's role is to encourage participation from all parts of the population to the role of Governor or Board Member and once appointed they have the necessary information, advice, support and training to fulfil the role.

As school governors' responsibilities have been amended or increased the work of the service has changed and expanded. In 2006 the Children's Service Department was restructured to match district boundaries and professional time was increased to reflect the need to develop and support new governance arrangements. The service employs 19 permanent members of staff and a large number of casual staff such as clerks; associate tutors and governor advisors are deployed as demand dictates.

The service delivers high levels of service to customers and is widely perceived as delivering more than set out in the Service Level Agreement to Governing Bodies.

3. METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

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

The on-site assessment commenced with an opening meeting.

The assessment activity and the partial compliances were discussed. The itinerary had been agreed with Hampshire County Council - Governor Services 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: Hampshire County Council - Governor Services

5. ON-SITE ASSESSMENT

The Assessor was accompanied throughout the assessment by Bob West 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	
2	2		0	1
3	2		0	
4	3		0	
5	2		0	1

Number of good practices awarded during the assessment	56
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Have the partial compliance(s) raised at the last assessment been closed?	N/A
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6. AREAS OF PARTIAL COMPLIANCE

CRITERION 1

None

CRITERION 2

None

CRITERION 3

None

CRITERION 4

None

CRITERION 5

None

7. OBSERVATIONS

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

Areas for Improvement

- You may wish to consider if there is the potential for greater use of technology across the service to reduce the amount of paper records kept by Governor Service.
- You may wish to consider ensuring that when undertaking the support to Governing Bodies that involves Review of Governance you close the feedback loop by enquiring what actions are put into place routinely after say a six-month period.

Areas of Good Practice

- Detailed information about all of the governors appointed to schools and children and education centre partnership boards is maintained centrally by the service. This is matched to the population make up of Hampshire to ensure governing bodies represent the local population in terms of ethnicity, disability and special needs. Further work has been undertaken during the past year to identify the areas of disadvantage that current and potential Governors may live in order to appoint Governors who truly reflect the population needs.
- This information is used to gain particular insight about the needs of differing governing bodies and services are adjusted to deliver to these needs. Good examples of this in action were provided by differing customer groups at the assessment.
- Particular efforts are made to identify the hard to reach groups within the population and the service encourages participation from these groups in the process of governance for schools, children's centres and education centres ensuring that arrangements reflect the ethnic mix of local populations and has reasonable participation from those with disabilities.
- The service has a clear, unambiguous strategy for engaging and consulting with customers using a variety of methods including training evaluation forms, the Service Review Group and Children's Centre Partnership Boards.

- Extensive consultation takes place with customers over service delivery and developments of interest to those undertaking governance and the results of this consultation are promptly fed back to participants along with actions planned to deliver changing and effective governance.
- A review of the strategy for engaging and consulting with customers is regularly undertaken using the Service Review Group and the returns from surveys demonstrate that results of engagement and consultation are both reliable and representative of all customer groups.
- Satisfaction levels for the full range of customers testing the full range of services are carried out using surveys. The testing process ensures all services are tested annually.
- Results of surveys are analysed and published using newsletters and the Service Review Group and used to further develop services and this was confirmed in discussions with members of this group.
- Satisfaction surveys include questions relating to key areas of service delivery such as timeliness, information, access and the quality of customer service along with specific questions informed by insight and this was demonstrated in the latest surveys.
- Targets for satisfaction are set at extremely high levels and you show that generally satisfaction levels show an upward trend over time. Further improvements in overall satisfaction were noted from the latest Quality of Service questionnaires. Your current survey results show over 98% satisfaction with Governor Services.
- There is clear evidence that services have improved as a result of examining customer journeys the e-learning package, on line bookings and the limiting of Hants Direct to ensure customers have direct line access to services are all good examples of this.
- The service is committed to putting customers at the heart of service delivery and this is made apparent in every contact with customers. Observation and discussion with customers at the assessment further confirmed the complete focus on the customer provided by Hampshire Governor Services.
- Customer insight is used in the business planning process and by the teams in regular service planning days that involve the whole team.
- The service has clear and comprehensive policies and procedures in place that put customer service at the centre of all activity and the policies support the right of customers to receive excellent service.
- All customers are treated fairly and this is confirmed in feedback from the surveys undertaken. In addition, the Assessor was able to gain confirmation of this in discussions with a wide range of customers and partners.
- There are robust policies, processes and training in place to protect customer privacy both in face-to-face discussion and the storage and transfer of information. Training records, the minutes of the Training Liaison Governors Meeting and e-mail's about a specific governor are all good examples of this in practice.

- Staff are actively encouraged to promote a can do attitude in line with Hampshire County Council's focus on customer service and perform particularly well in this area.
- Customer service competencies are identified for all staff working in the service and robustly tested in recruitment and performance management.
- Survey results and discussion with customers at assessment confirm that staff are consistently polite and friendly and have an in depth understanding of customer needs.
- The appraisal process measures the customer focus of individuals and incorporates this into service performance management systems.
- Extensive use is made of service development days to put ideas for improvement into action ensuring consistency across all parts of the service.
- The contribution made by individual staff to delivering customer focused services is recognised and all staff at all levels of the organisation constantly demonstrate customer-focused behaviour. A point consistently made by a number of governors and partners seen at assessment.
- An impressive range of information is provided about the service, how it is run and who is in charge.
- Charges for the service are set out clearly on the web site, in the training prospectus and in the Clerk's booklet. The service offers core services, subscription services and paid as used services and clearly identifies the differences.
- Information is provided through a variety of media and the Quality of Service questionnaire specifically tests if Governors needs and preferences in the way in which information is delivered are met. Over 93% of all Governors responding confirmed that needs and preferences are met. The 6% who felt they were not identified no common coherent themes that would allow the service to make changes.
- Customer understanding of the information provided is tested in surveys and you regularly improve the range, content and quality of verbal, published and web based information. Surveys test that the information improvements provided are relevant to customer needs.
- The Quality of Service questionnaire tests that information is accurate and complete and where this is not the case customers are advised when full information will be provided.
- A wide range of access channels is made available to customers including at learning centres and electronically as well as by post and telephone.
- You monitor usage of access channels and make changes to services to improve access in response to customer needs. The development of a shared e-mail inbox is a good example of this as is the implementation of a Customer Relationship Management database.
- Venues used by customers are both clean and comfortable and customer views on this aspect are positive.

- You work actively with a range of other providers including Children's Services across the County Council and your partnerships are of clear benefit to customers.
- Clear lines of accountability exist for all partnerships whether delivered by other parts of the County Council or through external partners.
- Council Officers working within Governor Services also act as both governors and clerks to governing bodies, members of Children Centre Boards and Education Centre Management Committees thereby supporting local communities.
- Your customers speak very highly of the service provided and the responsive manner in which the service operates. They also compliment the service greatly as staff often go the extra mile to meet customer needs.
- Challenging standards are set for the service taking account of the statutory requirements of the Department for Education.
- A robust monitoring process is in place across all service standards and performance data shows that standards are met.
- Customers, citizens, partners and staff are consulted over the setting and review of standards raising these where practicable.
- Service levels are clearly set out in the Service Level Agreement, the Clerking Service Booklet and the Training Booklet that sets out the governor training on offer during the current financial year.
- Surveys demonstrate that the service delivers what is promised and governors confirmed in discussions that the outcomes were positive for them.
- Benchmarking against other Governor Services is embedded into the thinking of the service and this information is used to identify and action potential improvements to services.
- Dips in performance are identified and reported to governing bodies along with the actions planned to address these.
- There is a clear, easy to use complaints process in place that includes a commitment to deal fully with issues and to resolve them within a given time frame. This matches the complaints procedure adopted corporately by Hampshire County Council.
- Staff are given guidance and training during their induction programme in handling complaints and additional specific training is provided to enable appointed staff to investigate complaints objectively.
- The service uses all complaints as learning opportunities and identifies patterns in complaints, detailing the actions taken following complaints in the Annual Report that is published in the Hampshire Governor newsletter. It is important to note that in the current financial year four complaints were received of which three were upheld but 303 compliments were recorded.
- You have added a sentence to the response letter to complainants to identify if customers whose complaint is upheld are satisfied with the

- outcome and the current reports show that customers are satisfied with the outcome of upheld complaints.
- Appropriate and measurable standards are set for the timeliness of response to all forms of customer contact and these are detailed in the Service Level Agreement provided to each subscribing governing body.
 - Comprehensive standards for all aspects of the quality of customer service to be expected by customers are set out in the Service Level Agreement.
 - Customers are advised of these standards and performance is measured in the Quality of Service Questionnaires.
 - Customer needs are identified at the first point of contact and the appropriate professional within the service is identified who can meet the customer need.
 - There is an effective and co-ordinated approach to sharing information within the Education Services. This was further confirmed by conversations with other parts of the Local Authorities Education Services.
 - If service is not completed at the first point of contact the customer is informed and a time frame for completion agreed between the customer and the service.
 - You respond promptly to initial enquiries and demonstrated this in the mystery shopper results and e-mail logs. Where a delay is incurred then you agree with your customers the response times. Governors commented on the prompt and helpful response they received when making enquiries.
 - There is a robust mechanism in place to monitor performance against timeliness and customer service standards.
 - You meet your standards for both timeliness and quality of customer service currently showing over 98% compliance against all standards.
 - Performance is extensively benchmarked with other similar Local Authority Governor Services and compares well.

Areas of Compliance Plus

- None

8. ACTION PLANNING & NEXT STEPS

The achievement of Customer Service Excellence is an ongoing activity and it is important that Hampshire County Council - Governor Services 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 Hampshire County Council - Governor Services retains a copy of this report to aid continuous improvement, and as a reference document for future assessment reviews.

Criterion		Maximum number of partial compliances	Number of non-compliances	Number of partial compliances	Number of Full compliances
1	Customer Insight	2	0	0	21
2	The Culture of the Organisation	2	0	0	33
3	Information and Access	2	0	0	36
4	Delivery	3	0	0	39
5	Timeliness and Quality of Service	2	0	0	30

Good practices awarded during the assessment			56
Compliance Plus awarded during the assessment			0



