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# **CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE CONTINUOUS COMPLIANCE REPORT**

**for**

**Pensions Services Hampshire County  
Council**

**on behalf of**



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## 1. Key Information

Assessor Name	Neil Potentier
Visit Date	11 <sup>th</sup> April 2013
Assessment Reference No:	13/0050

## 2. Assessor's Findings

### 2.1 Front Line Service Delivery

This aspect continues to improve and enjoy high levels of customer satisfaction. Staff are highly motivated and have pride in their work to the extent that Front Line staff want to achieve 100% first time resolution at first point of contact. Service is being improved through more integrated working with people swapping roles within Front Line to achieve greater efficiency levels and ultimately improve the customer journey. In addition, the previous year's review has led to many improvements which is indicative of the continuous improvement culture within Pensions Services

### 2.2 Levels of Complaints and Satisfaction

Whilst satisfaction levels remain high, complaints continue to reduce. Given a back-drop of ever increasing numbers of customers this is to be commended. There were 4 informal complaints since October 2012 and 2 formal complaints in the last quarter. The complaints process has been reviewed and improved using the IDR process.

### 2.3 Progress Made

Pensions services have worked to remove Partial Compliances in Elements 4.1.2 & 5.3.2 which arose due to them not meeting their standard for 'Notionals'. In addition it is now apparent that Customer Service Excellence is fully embedded in the organisation's ethos, policies and procedures, and this has culminated in a Compliant Plus for Element 2.1.1.

### 2.4 Issues Which May Affect Certification

There are no issues which affect Certification and in an uncertain economic climate it would seem that Pensions Services are now receiving greater support and appreciation from within Corporate Services due to their outstanding track record, much of which can be put down to their commitment to Customer Service Excellence.

## 3. Findings by Criterion

### 3.1 Criterion 1 – Customer Insight

Pension Services continue to capture finite details on their customers as new members come on board and add to this with additional data captured from Contact Forms. Training sessions helps inform customer insight with a cross section of employers invited to End of Year sessions so as to gain an understanding of relevant needs. These sessions were ran after first consulting with customers to see if these would meet their needs. Customer insight is also obtained from the Police Technical Group, regular meetings, HPOG and an auto-enrolment group. The latter was designed to specifically meet the needs of a new requirement. Pension Services are currently investigating the use of E-learning modules to help hard-to-reach groups such as people who work part-time or have travel restrictions.

Forums, focus groups, employer days and training sessions are the main methods for engaging and consulting with customers and in reviewing their strategy for consultation Pensions Services created End of Year training sessions.

Feedback on customer satisfaction is also obtained via the methods above with results published on the web site within the employer section. Pension web site stats and PCST phone call stats are also made available on the web site. Targets and standards are deliberately challenging and Pensions Service have been striving to meet and better the industry standard for 'Notionals'. This has been recently achieved. A particular focus for improving the customer journey recently has been via looking at the use of the web site in terms of customer navigation. Improvements have been made as a result.

For any specific Elements not covered above the situation is as per 2012

### **Strengths**

- Embracing face-to-face contact with customer groups as an effective method of consultation with sessions specifically tailored to their needs.
- Ongoing process improvements continue to be made typified by a bank of recent projects which ultimately have improved the customer journey.

### **Areas for Development**

- You may wish to set a challenging target for the escalation of queries from level 1 to level 2 based on the objective of minimising (or even eliminating) any secondary escalation. Other CSE clients have found this approach to be motivational for Front Line staff. Given your cross-training and role swapping you have the potential to achieve this.
- Review the appropriateness of using Road Shows as a means of consultation and engagement.
- End of Year is clearly a potentially stressful time for your customers and you may wish to fully evaluate how effective this year's End of Year has been and what lessons can be learnt and improvements made for 2014.
- Continue to explore the potential for improvement afforded by Customer Journey Mapping as a process improvement tool.

## **3.2 Criterion 2 – The Culture of the Organisation**

The corporate commitment to customer excellence has increased through more embedding of a customer focus within policies and procedures such as dedicated CSE pages and files. It is indicative that Pensions Service undertake an annual full review of their evidence submission against the CSE criteria despite there only being a requirement to do so every third year. In addition there have been some changes in the management structure and the new link into Corporate level reaffirmed their commitment to supporting Pensions services with their customer commitment. Senior management have also further demonstrated their commitment by fully taking on board the development points raised at the review in 2012. Customer focus is further embedded into people processes such as performance management with individual (IPP targets) objectives set which are specifically related to delivering customer excellence. Staff continue to bring their customer insight to the table with channels improved so that they have more outlets for their suggestions. Staff were involved in the review of the web site and are planned to be involved in a review of the admin strategy. There are a number of policies and procedures which support the right of customers and ensure they are treated fairly. These include Service Level Agreements, a complaints procedure, document return policies and a customer charter. As part of the need to treat all customers fairly, twilight sessions are also run to allow customers greater access. In terms of data storage and transfer there is a data protection policy and IT security is taken seriously with appropriate documents and devices.

Staff continue to confirm they feel empowered to participate in a customer focussed culture with the IPP target giving ownership. A strong customer focus also exist in all people processes

including induction and customer care training. Role play scenarios have also been used at the recruitment stage for the appointment of a Senior Revenue Team Manager. The customer care training reiterates the need for politeness and friendliness and the IPP process allows for staff recognition through performance management. Wider recognition can be made through various Corporate staff awards within the Council.

For any specific Elements not covered above the situation is as per 2012

### Strengths

- The corporate commitment to customer excellence has clearly increased **and this has resulted in a Compliant Plus in Element 2.1.1.**
- You have now clearly embedded a customer focussed ethos in all your people processes.

### Areas for Development

- Consider whether to have a dedicate section on Customer Service Excellence within your induction process. This would send out a strong message to new starters as to the importance of excellent customer service from day one.
- Continue with your work in progress with regard to projects areas where service can be improved still further. These include a continuous improvement policy and the possible creation of a '3C' approach to monitor, analyse and learn from complaints, concerns and compliments.

### 3.3 Criterion 3 – Information and Access

Pensions Services have recently improved their web site so as to provide comprehensive, easy-to-use information and facilitate better navigation throughout the site. An on-line pension calculator has also been introduced. This was undertaken as a major project with the involvement of customers and staff. New member starter packs continue to be used to give new members hard-copy information on all aspects of services including charges. A schedule of charges is also on the web site.

Automatic enrolment has been introduced as per industry requirements and this affords the customer another service option. Update are also issued such as the AXISE Employer Module update. 'Pensioner News' is also now available via the web site. Pensions Services monitor and report on DBs to make sure customer have received and understood information. In addition to the web site review, improvements have been made to information by way of a Forms project and Starter Packs have also been updated. Annual Benefits statements also look at ensuring information given is accurate and complete.

There are alternative channels to which improve accessibility and these include a Polish Scheme Guide, Braille documents, auto-enrolment, web site calculators and face-to-face events such as Twilight sessions. Use is also made of traditional methods such as phone, email, fax and letter and senior management confirmed that they try and keep all channels open and do not want to enforce a communication's channel shift. Evaluation on the use of communication channels has led to improvements such as the web site review and the introduction of a new Avaya phone system. Clean and comfortable rooms are used for training sessions and clean and private rooms are available within Council HQ for visitors

Pensions Services have worked with PHD to deliver Annual Benefit Statements and a similar arrangement exist with FCS to produce payslips and newsletters in a format which meets the needs of the customers. Training sessions are coordinated with LPFA so as to ensure they are delivered professionally. Pensions Services engage with wider communities through charity events such as Children In Need and Comic Relief.

For any specific Elements not covered above the situation is as per 2012

## Strengths

- Improvements made to web site resulting in more information being made available to customers.
- Continuing to keep a wide variety of communication channels open.

## Areas for Development

- Consider exploring the potential of emerging new methods of communication such as SMS, social media and apps in terms of their appropriateness to the Pensions industry.

### 3.4 Criterion 4 – Delivery

A comprehensive bank of KPIs exists including some which are linked to National Targets and obligatory Standards and these are seen as ‘challenging and demanding’ by senior management. This is due to their number and the range of issues as well as Pensions Services desire to exceed these wherever possible. Pensions Services are currently meeting all their KPIs, targets and standards as validated by management reports. Results are publicised on the web site and can also be found within the Annual Report.

A Customer Charter and Service Level Agreements help determine what customers can expect from the onset. In addition the Starter Pack also provides this information and the use of Statutory Notifications also further enhances what people can expect. There has been consultation with customer and partners on the setting of standards for the web site and Axise Module log-in.

Part of the process in agreeing what customer can expect from the onset is to use Admission Bodies to respond to initial enquiries, instruct fund actuaries and liaise with contractors and advisors. There are other duties in addition to these and new employers are made aware of all these duties. Compliment folders and regular reviews of performance indicators show that Pensions Services deliver the service they promise. Performance has been benchmarked against the Cheshire Pension fund and a comparison of charging policies is a planned future project. Learning from best practice reveals a number of areas which have been looked into such as absence management, employer discretion polices and templates for auto-enrolment. In addition, great use has been made of development points raised during CSE reviews. AXISE downtime has been identified as a dip in performance and subsequently addressed with relevant customers advised. There is a written complaints process (IDRP) and this has been reviewed and improved with a flow-chart process adopted.

For any specific Elements not covered above the situation is as per 2012

**Element 4.1.2 has now been removed as an area of Partial Compliance** due to the inroads you have made in clearing the ‘Notionals’ back-log and allowing you to meet your target.

## Strengths

- Setting and meeting a challenging set of targets and standards
- The use of a flow-chart approach to show the revised IDRP process.
- Your responsiveness to development points raise at previous reviews continues to be excellent and shows your appetite for continuous improvement and the open minded approach you display towards learning from best practice

## Areas for Development

- Consider merging all your internal and external targets and standards into one composite definitive document which would demonstrate excellent transparency.
- Following on from the above consider your presentation of results to show a user-friendly, easy-to-understand picture of how results compare with internal and national targets as well as national actual results.

## 3.5 Criterion 5 – Timeliness and Quality of Service

The comprehensive standards include many relating to timeliness such as telephone calls, emails, letters, complaints, etc. In addition timeliness is specified for specific aspects of the customer journey through the pension processes and standards exist for all other factors such as quality of service, access of information, etc. All promises on timeliness and quality are stated in the Customer Charter, Service Level Agreements and Starter Packs. There is also a contact us achieve form which also states a timescale for replies.

Customer are advised on promises regarding timeliness and quality via the Charter on the web site and the Pension Customer Support Team (PCST) work on ensuring queries reach the right person first time. Information is shared with colleagues on partners on such things as ASBC queries (with partners) and via 'Hantsfile' for staff. The latter is the Council's document management system and there is a vast amount and wide range of information that employees can access, much of which is relevant to customer service. As a result of service not being completed on a retirement issue, the AVC process has been changed to prevent a reoccurrence. Checklist are now used to try and complete service or identify what needs to be done in the event a query is not dealt with at first point of call. Cross-training and swapping of roles between operational and other teams is helping maximise queries being dealt with first time and there has also been a review of email procedures with the same goal in mind.

Pensions Services regularly (monthly) monitor and meet their performance targets and these include a target for 'Notionals' which was not met in 2012. In subsequently meeting this target the partial Compliance for Element 5.3.2 has now been removed. Comparisons have been made with other schemes and Pensions Services compare favourably and a comparison has also been made between various customer charters.

## Strengths

- 'Hantsfile' has emerged as a real strength through allowing staff greater access to customer focussed information. This has enhanced the sharing of information between colleagues.
- Cross training and swapping of staff is increasing efficiencies and opportunities to complete enquiries at first point of contact.

## Areas for Development

- Again given the advent of new competition look at how you can compare yourselves with the competition and promote favourable results to your customers (or use this to attract new customers).

## **4. Outcome**

Following this visit I can confirm that you continue to meet the requirements to maintain Customer Service Excellence Standard Certification. I can confirm the next annual monitoring check will be carried out twelve months from the date of this visit.

If you feel you would benefit from an assessment before this date, please contact either myself and/or emqc on 0845 304 8600.

Neil Potentier  
April 2013

## 5. Compliance against the Customer Service Excellence Standard

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Non Compliant	Partial Compliance	Compliant	Compliance Plus
1	1.1	1.1.1			X	
		1.1.2			X	
		1.1.3			X	
	1.2	1.2.1			X	
		1.2.2			X	
		1.2.3			X	
	1.3	1.3.1			X	
		1.3.2			X	
		1.3.3			X	
		1.3.4			X	
		1.3.5			X	

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Non Compliant	Partial Compliance	Compliant	Compliance Plus
2	2.1	2.1.1				X
		2.1.2			X	
		2.1.3			X	
		2.1.4			X	
		2.1.5			X	
		2.1.6			X	
	2.2	2.2.1			X	
		2.2.2			X	
		2.2.3			X	
		2.2.4			X	
		2.2.5			X	

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Non Compliant	Partial Compliance	Compliant	Compliance Plus
3	3.1	3.1.1			X	
		3.1.2			X	
	3.2	3.2.1			X	
		3.2.2			X	
		3.2.3			X	
		3.2.4			X	
	3.3	3.3.1			X	
		3.3.2			X	
		3.3.3			X	
	3.4	3.4.1			X	
		3.4.2			X	
		3.4.3			X	

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Non Compliant	Partial Compliance	Compliant	Compliance Plus	
4	4.1	4.1.1			X		
		4.1.2			X		
		4.1.3			X		
	4.2	4.2.1				X	
		4.2.2				X	
		4.2.3				X	
		4.2.4				X	
	4.3	4.3.1				X	
		4.3.2				X	
		4.3.3				X	
		4.3.4				X	
		4.3.5				X	
			4.3.6			X	

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Non Compliant	Partial Compliance	Compliant	Compliance Plus	
5	5.1	5.1.1			X		
		5.1.2			X		
	5.2	5.2.1				X	
		5.2.2				X	
		5.2.3				X	
		5.2.4				X	
		5.2.5				X	
	5.3	5.3.1				X	
		5.3.2				X	
		5.3.3				X	