

**Registration  
Service  
Customer  
Engagement  
Strategy**

# Contents

<b>Contents</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction and background</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Objectives and aims</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>What is customer engagement?</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Who are our customers and stakeholders?</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>How do customers get involved?</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>When should customer engagement be considered?</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>What types of engagement activities do we undertake?</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>What do customers want?</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>How do we use data from our customer engagement activities?</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>How do we communicate results and actions?</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Training</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Our commitment to Equal Opportunities</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Officer responsibilities</b>	<b>12</b>

## Introduction and background

The Civil Registration Service in England and Wales has existed since 1837. Its main purpose is to create accurate and timely records of all Births, Still-births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships.

Members of the public are required by law to give information to registration officers in order that they can make records of these vital events. The records are held in registers which form the legal record. Copies of all events are sent to the General Register Office to form a national central archive. These records allow us to produce certificates of Births, Deaths and Marriages for official and legal purposes as well as for genealogy purposes. Civil registration data also proves information about the nation's health and population through the use of statistics.

The service solemnises marriages in the register office and approved premises and records marriages in some registered buildings. The legal preliminaries to marriage, notice of intention to marry or to form a Civil Partnership, are conducted by the service.

The civil registration service in England and Wales is a partnership between the Registrar General, local authorities and registration officers.

Hartlepool Registration Service is committed to providing customers with high quality registration services at key times in their lives, reflected in the services provided by the service and the skill and dedication of staff.

The public are served in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations and the principles outlined in Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC)'s policies and procedures. The service is customer focused and the high standard of service delivery achieved reflects positively on the local authority.

This Customer Engagement Strategy will facilitate effective customer participation. To maintain a high level of customer service success, it is vital to understand the needs of our customers as well as their views on the services and products that we provide. This will assist in maintaining the high level of service reputation that Hartlepool Registration Service holds. We can achieve this understanding by ensuring regular dialogue with our customers and stakeholders is established and maintained as part of the day-to-day business.

Hartlepool Registration Service submits Annual Performance Reviews to the Registrar General reporting on key service developments, performance indicators and confirming adherence to the Code of Practice; evidencing our Customer Engagement is part of this Code of Practice. Customer Engagement has always been part of HBC's Service Delivery Plan, this document has been created to formalise our customer engagement strategy.

Hartlepool Registration Service aims to:

- Make the best use of resources, being innovative and creative and seeking continuous improvement.
- Provide services that give value for money and are based on best practice.
- Put people at the heart of what we do and to value their views.
- Involve and listen to our customers and be responsive to their needs.
- Work with stakeholders to improve the customer journey.
- Develop, support and retain staff who are highly skilled, valued and empowered to deliver our goals.

In order to deliver on these objectives, the Superintendent Registrar pursues a number of initiatives in consultation with all members of the registration team, our customers and stakeholders:

- Continuous customer consultation to ensure services are developed and delivered in accordance with customer demand.
- Reviews of processes to ensure that best use is made of the resources available.
- Development of our partnerships with other registration services and local and central government departments.

## Objectives and aims

The aims of this document are to detail:

- Who are our customers?
- What is customer engagement?
- When should customer engagement be considered?
- What types of engagement activities do we undertake?
- How do we use the results from customer engagement activities?
- How do we feedback engagement results and actions to our customers?

In promoting participation we will:

- Meet our statutory, regulatory and contractual duties and comply with legislation and codes of practice.
- Comply with the relevant guidance.
- Encourage involvement of all customers regardless of age, gender, race, religion, marital status, political or sexual orientation or disability.
- Monitor the effectiveness of our performance and provide feedback to all customers.

We will:

- Make participation easy and accessible to everyone.
- Promote real opportunities for participation.
- Provide resources for participation.
- Make sure the views and priorities are reflected in the services we provide.

It is essential that the services we provide are the services that our customers want to receive. We want to deliver the right services, in the right manner and at the right time.

## What is customer engagement?

Hartlepool Borough Council is committed to delivering a service that meets, and where possible exceeds, the national standards in all areas. We believe customer engagement is about being involved with people and their ideas in order to understand them better. Engaging with our customers helps to build a connection between customers and Hartlepool Registration Service.

Having a Customer Engagement Strategy helps us to:

- Better understand customers' needs and expectations.
- Strengthen our relationship with customers and stakeholders.
- Be more accountable to our customers.
- Give people more control over the services they receive.
- Improve the range and standards of the services we provide.
- Identify problems and work to develop solutions.

By taking time to participate in the engagement activities that are available, our customers have the opportunity to:

- Shape future customer experiences.
- Improve communication between policy makers, service departments and service users.
- Be involved in process improvements and influence decisions.
- Identify innovative solutions.

We recognise that as well as regular feedback surveys, our customers provide their thoughts on our services through multiple routes and existing processes. These include, but are not exclusive to:

- telephone calls;
- letters;
- emails;
- online services;
- visits to the register office;
- attendance at meetings and groups;
- HBC's comments, complaints and compliments procedure.

## Who are our customers and stakeholders?

Whilst not an exhaustive list, the Hartlepool Registration Service considers the following stakeholders as customers within this customer engagement strategy:

- Members of the public for statutory and non-statutory registration services;
- Hartlepool residents;
- General Register Office (GRO);
- Home Office;
- UK Visas and Immigration;
- Hartlepool Borough Council and other local authorities;
- Central Government Departments;
- Office for National Statistics;
- The Coroner Service;
- Funeral Directors;
- Clergy of the Church of England;
- Ministers and members of other Religious Denominations;
- General Medical Practitioners;
- Hospitals, Hospices, Nursing and Care Homes;
- Approved Venues (for marriage and civil partnership) Operators.

## How do customers get involved?

We need to ensure that we listen to everyone and ensure that the feedback we receive is representative of all customers and potential customers, not just a few.

Customers can:

- respond to postal or email surveys;
- discuss issues in person at the register office;
- make comments and feedback through the website;
- use our comments, compliments and complaints procedure;
- attend consultation events or public meetings;
- use social media to keep up to date with our activities.

## When should customer engagement be considered?

It is essential that all staff recognise feedback when it is given. Every opportunity for the collection of feedback data should be taken.

In addition there will be instances where specific engagement is crucial. Major changes to the Registration Service or the implementation of new or different processes following legislative or regulatory change requires engagement with key stakeholders to assist in shaping how we respond.

Staff will engage as below in order to build an understanding of the strategy, the processes to be followed and the benefits of engagement for both the service and our customers.

- staff briefing sessions;
- one-to-one training;
- workshops;
- involvement in project groups.

## What types of engagement activities do we undertake?

Customers can be asked to comment on many areas such as customer service, communications, and the quality of information available to them.

The range of customer engagement activities that are or can be used to record feedback on many aspects of customer service is diverse, and includes:

- surveys (sent or given to customers after direct contact with the service);
- online via the website;
- HBC's corporate complaints, comments and compliments process;
- and during face-to-face contact, for example:
  - visitors to our register office or other venues we attend;
  - at stakeholder meetings and events.



We operate a continuous customer survey of all members of the public using the registration service. They give us a lot of valuable information about the services we provide and cover:

- Registering a birth;
- Registering a death;
- Marriage and Civil Partnership ceremonies;
- Naming and Renewal of Vows ceremonies.

In addition to the continuous customer survey and in order to capture the views of other users and stakeholders on any changes to the registration service and future provision, Hartlepool Registration Service can access established panels and the relevant forum providing consultation facilities.

In these circumstances, questionnaires may be sent to:

- Funeral Directors
- Venues licensed for ceremonies
- Council Members and Officers
- GP practices and Hospitals, Hospices, Nursing and Care Homes
- Coroners
- Bereavement Officers
- Registration Officers (from other authorities)
- Other local authority departments
- Central Government stakeholders

More formal consultation questionnaires would be made available in the council reception areas and an electronic format of the consultation would be placed on the Registration Service's web page throughout any consultation period.

Channels of communication are used, such as the Council's Hartbeat magazine, the local press, the Council's website, social media and stakeholder meetings are arranged where appropriate.

## What do customers want?

We believe our customers want us to:

- Be clear, to the point and open in our communication;
- Act on what they say - listening and responding decisively;
- Continue to improve how and when we communicate;
- Deliver our services within a time and to a quality agreed with those customers;
- Involve them in reviewing how we perform locally, regionally and nationally.

## How do we use data from our customer engagement activities?

It is essential that customer engagement is not just a ‘tick-box’ exercise. The results from any engagement activity should be used by the service in order to improve the customer experience that we provide.

Analysis from the feedback data will be compiled and reported within the Council’s corporate performance monitoring programme, for members and officers.

A report providing analysis of feedback can be incorporated into the Hartlepool Registration Service Delivery Plan.

Details of what we have been told and what we will do are also incorporated into the Annual Report to the Registrar General.

Following the reviews of feedback, the following actions will take place:

- All feedback is shared with staff via email or in staff briefing sessions.
- All feedback and actions decided by scrutiny committees or wider Council is reported to managers, staff and customers.
- An annual overview of all feedback to be added to a ‘How did we do?’ page on website.
- The Superintendent Registrar will consider if any customer suggestions / feedback need to be investigated further through informal or formal processes.

- The Superintendent Registrar will identify any areas for further actions from feedback analysis.

It is important to note that decisions can not be made based solely only on customer feedback. An approach considering both business needs and customer feedback should be taken regarding any decision which would affect our customers.

Key performance indicators (KPIs) will be used to monitor the success of changes that have been implemented. We will also use feedback results from previous years as a benchmark to monitor continued satisfaction and ensure that areas where we excel continue to grow.

## How do we communicate results and actions?

Hartlepool Registrations Service will provide feedback on how customer engagement data has been used in the most practical means, including:

- Our website page;
- In the Annual Report to the Registrar General;
- In mailings (electronic or paper).

## Training

It is essential that staff members understand and implement our customer engagement processes appropriately. This leads to better decision making, improves relations between staff and customers and leads to more satisfied customers.

Training includes:

- Customer care;
- Importance and benefits of participation;
- Legal responsibilities for delivery of registration services under relevant legislation;
- Good practice.

## Our commitment to Equal Opportunities

Hartlepool Borough Council recognises that people have different needs, requirements and goals and we will work actively against all forms of discrimination by promoting good relations and mutual respect within and between our communities, residents, elected members, job applicants and workforce. Communication will be clear, understandable and relevant and in the customer preferred format.

Supporting strategies;

- [Equality and Diversity Plan](#).
- [Customer Charter](#).

## Officer responsibilities

All staff members will:

- Be responsible for providing excellent service to customers and stakeholders.
- Be trained to the highest level of competence for their roles.

The Superintendent Registrar will be responsible for:

- The collection of feedback and for the analysis of data.
- Discussing the data and engaging with their team to implement service improvements.
- Identifying further qualitative information from actions discussed.
- Presenting this information to all stakeholders through the appropriate channel.

**For further information about this strategy  
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