



Home Office

**Identity &
Passport Service**

**THE REGISTRATION SERVICE
HOUNSLOW**

SERVICE DELIVERY INSPECTION

**Delivery Partnership Unit
General Register Office
February 2009**

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INTRODUCTION

1

Background

- 1.1 As part of the Civil Registration Modernisation agenda local authorities are being given greater freedom to deliver the local registration service. The Registrar General will however continue to have overall responsibility for civil registration in England and Wales, and will work in partnership with local authorities to ensure the delivery of statutory services and encourage good practice. To help with the transition towards these new arrangements the Registrar General's Delivery Partnership Unit is undertaking Service Delivery Inspections (SDIs) throughout England and Wales. SDI's will assess local delivery standards against those set out in the LACORS Good Practice Guide for registration services, and also report on organisational and technical aspects of the service.

Terms of Reference

- 1.2 The review will assess service delivery to the customer and the quality of work. The terms of reference are to assess performance in the following areas:
- current service delivery standards using the Good Practice Guide
 - the technical ability of staff (including reviewing Civil Partnerships)
 - provision for customers

Methodology

- 1.3 The following methods were used to gather information, assess standards and measure performance against the Good Practice Guide:
- examination of registration records via the RON system and associated documentation
 - observation of the registration of events, notice taking and ceremonies, and interviews with registration staff
 - meetings with registration managers and other officers
 - consideration of reports and statistics from the General Register Office (GRO)
 - general observations and evaluation of customer comment

Acknowledgement

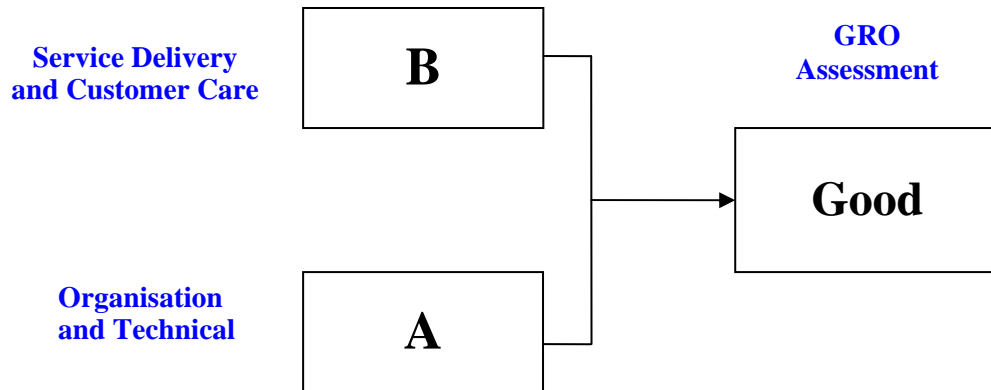
- 1.4 The Delivery Partnership Unit would like to extend its thanks to all those who contributed to this review.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

2

Overall Assessment Rating

2.1 The London Borough of Hounslow has been rated as follows:



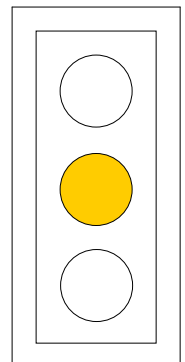
(The overall GRO assessment marks are: Excellent, Good, Fair and Weak. These are derived from a marking frame which assesses district performance against the Good Practice Guide for registration services and the associated technical quality. The underpinning marks are; 'A' which indicates that the required standards are being exceeded in a number of areas, 'B' that performance is good with a few minor improvements requirements, 'C' that a number of improvements are required and 'D' that there are serious failings in service provision and performance)

2.2 The above ratings show that Hounslow is performing to a good standard with regard to service provision with a high level of organisational and technical competence. Although some technical issues have been identified, overall the standard is excellent and demonstrates the commitment to training within the office. There are sound systems and processes in place which result in an effective working environment. On the customer care front, while there is some scope for wider consultation and feedback to help inform a service development plan, the personal service delivery by staff members is very good.

Preparedness for New Governance

2.3 As part of the approval process, which will allow greater freedom for local authorities to manage their registration service, there is a requirement to commit to a code of practice and to meet the national standards contained within the Good Practice Guide.

2.4 Hounslow has no immediate plans to move towards new governance. When the local authority feels it is in a position to do so the current Service Delivery Plan will need to be developed through customer and stakeholder consultation and include monitoring systems which can measure all the key performance indicators.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

2 (continued)

Inspectorate Recommendations

2.5 Inspectorate recommendations are recorded within the body of the report. Key Recommendations are provided below:

Chapter 3 – District Profile

- i) The local authority should consider erecting street signage to indicate the location of the Register Office (*see 3.2*)

Chapter 4 - Service Delivery Assessment

- ii) Formal monitoring systems should be introduced to enable the key performance indicators to be measured (*see 4.5*)
- iii) The office telephone system should be reviewed to allow easier customer contact and to include information on the emergency contact number out of hours (*see 4.17*)
- iv) The local authority should fully consult with both customers and stakeholders regarding service accessibility to help determine whether they are meeting the needs of customers (*see 4.26*)

Chapter 5 - Organisation and Technical Quality

- v) All incoming paperwork should be date stamped and logged so that a clear audit trail is in place (*see 5.17, 5.18, 5.19*)
- vi) The local authority should ensure regular attendance at the London Regional Managers Group meetings (*see 5.24*)

DISTRICT PROFILE

3

Location and Population

- 3.1 Formed in 1965 the London Borough of Hounslow is located in the west of outer London, covering an area of 56 sq km. It has a population of 218,600, according to 2007 population estimates (Office for National Statistics). The Registration Service forms part of Legal Services within the Corporate Services Department.
- 3.2 The Register Office is situated on Lampton Road in Hounslow, close to the town centre and civic centre complex. The office is served by bus routes from different parts of the borough and Hounslow Central underground station is a short walk away. There is ample free on site car parking available in front of the office. There is a sign outside the Register Office building but none along Lampton Road to indicate its location. **It is recommended that the local authority considers erecting street signage to the Register Office.**
- 3.3 The Register Office is situated on the Ground floor of a three storey Victorian building. It shares the accommodation with other local authority services. It comprises three interviewing rooms, a Superintendent Registrar's office, a ceremony room, strong room, two waiting areas and a reception/general office area.

Establishment and Business Activity

- 3.4 The core registration business undertaken for the 2007-8 financial year was as follows:

| Births | Deaths | Notices of Marriage/CP | Marriages | Civil Partnerships | Citizenship Ceremonies | Certificates (SR copies) |
|--------|--------|------------------------|-----------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3888 | 1439 | 2143 | 522 | 26 | 50 | 3274 |

- 3.5 Registration services are provided from the Register Office. Discussions have taken place recently with the West Middlesex Hospital with the aim of providing an office at the hospital for birth and death registrations.
- 3.6 Hounslow is a designated register office for the attestation of notices for non-EU nationals. This service also attracts customers from outside the borough from neighbouring districts who are unable to provide an early appointment or from districts which have no designated office.
- 3.7 Within Hounslow, the staffing profile consists of the Superintendent Registrar, Additional Superintendent Registrar, four Registrars of Births and Deaths, and two additional registrars. In addition there is one Registration Officer and a casual Deputy Superintendent Registrar. There are two citizenship officers who also act as deputies for birth and death registrations and marriage/civil partnership business. The Additional Superintendent Registrar's post has been vacant since July 2008 and the work covered by deputy support since then.

SERVICE DELIVERY ASSESSMENT

4

Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)

- 4.1 Whilst service delivery is measured against the Good Practice Guide as a whole, it is recognised that there are five underpinning Key Performance Indicators.
- 4.2 As part of the annual reporting process under New Governance arrangements, Local Authorities are specifically required to report on performance against these Indicators.
- 4.3 The table below shows the current position for Hounslow against the national standards. Currently, the district has monitoring mechanisms in place for three of the five key performance indicators. The office should introduce systems to monitor performance which will give them an opportunity to advertise their good achievements in line with the Good Practice Guide standards.

| KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|--|
| Key Indicators | Mechanisms in place | National standard | Performance rating |
| 1. Events registered within statutory timeframe i) % of Births registered within 42 days ii) % of Still-births registered within 42 days iii) % of Deaths registered with 5 days | Yes Data to be extracted from RON (GRO developing) | 98% 98% 98% | Compliant Compliant Non-compliant |
| 2. i) average waiting times for: - Birth registration/declaration - Still-birth registration/declaration - Death registration/declaration - Marriage/Civil Partnership Notice | No | 90% 90% 90% 90% | Compliant |
| 2 ii) % of customers for birth, still-birth and death registration/declaration seen within 10 minutes of appointment time | No | | Compliant |
| 3. Certificate applications % of applications dealt with within 5 days of receipt | No | 90% | Compliant |
| 4. % of satisfied customers (evidenced from response to customer satisfaction surveys and actual number of returned forms) | Yes | 85% | Compliant |
| 5. Total number of formal complaints received (actual and as a % of all registrations) | Yes | Less than 0.5% | Compliant |

SERVICE DELIVERY ASSESSMENT

4 (continued)

Good Practice Guide (GPG)

4.4 The following table summarises performance against the Good Practice Guide (GPG) by key activity. (*Appendix A provides further GPG detail*).

| GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE SUMMARY TABLE | | | | |
|---|---------------------|-----------|---------------|-------------|
| Category | Number of Standards | Compliant | Non compliant | Compliant % |
| 2. Application of Code of Practice | 3 | 1 | 2 | 33 |
| 3. Organisation | 18 | 15 | 3 | 83 |
| 4. Birth Registration | 8 | 7 | 1 | 88 |
| 5. Still-birth Registration (<i>see Note 1</i>) | 4 | 4 | 0 | 100 |
| 6. Death Registration | 10 | 8 | 2 | 80 |
| 7. Marriage / Civil Partnership | 4 | 4 | 0 | 100 |
| 8. Citizenship | 2 | 1 | 1 | 50 |
| 9. Statutory and administrative returns | 6 | 6 | 0 | 100 |
| 10. Certificates and Document management | 5 | 5 | 0 | 100 |
| Overall | 60 | 51 | 9 | 85 |

- 4.5 Currently, Hounslow is fully compliant with four of the national standard categories within the Good Practice Guide and has an overall compliancy rate of 85%. However monitoring mechanisms are fairly basic and could be improved. **It is therefore recommended that formal monitoring mechanisms be introduced to enable all the key performance indicators to be measured.**
- 4.6 The district is currently non compliant with regard to two of the Code of Practice standards. To address these issues the Service Delivery Plan needs to be further developed and informed through customer and stakeholder consultation. Additionally publication of local plans, performance reports and customer satisfaction levels would also add value and ensure adherence to the Code of Practice. **It is therefore recommended that the local authority develop and publish their Service Delivery plan, which should be informed through customer and stakeholder consultation. Service feedback should also be more widely publicised.**
- 4.7 In the key area of birth registration, between October 2008 and December 2008, 99% of births were registered within the statutory timescale (excluding declarations and re-registrations). This is a good achievement, meeting the “good practice” standard in the Good Practice Guide
- 4.8 In the key area of death registration, for the same period, 93% of deaths were registered within the statutory timescale (excluding inquests and declarations). It is noted, however, that the sample selected covered deaths occurring over a Bank Holiday period and three quarters of the late registrations were in fact registered within 6 or 7 days, with the National Standard of 98% being achieved after 7 days.

SERVICE DELIVERY ASSESSMENT

4 (continued)

- 4.9 An appointment system for birth and death customers was introduced during the middle of last year and this system is working well, with customers able to be seen within two days of request for a death registration or three days of request for a birth registration. Couples wishing to give Notice of marriage or civil partnership can be offered an appointment within a day or so of request. This service was confirmed during the inspection by diary observation. Customers without an appointment were also seen quickly, with appointment spaces available for them to be interviewed by the nominated officer.
- 4.10 A customer satisfaction survey of the registration service has recently been carried out for births and deaths customers and the results are due to be published in April 2009. Over 100 responses have been received. These show a high level of satisfaction with the service provided by Hounslow, with all respondents declaring themselves very satisfied or satisfied. A survey of marriage/civil partnership customers is due to follow in March 2009.
- 4.11 Certificate applications are prioritised to enable all urgent certificate applications to be dealt with on the same day. Examination of documentation indicates that the office has a 100% response rate in providing certificates within 5 days. This provides very good service, exceeding the Good Practice National Standard of 90%.
- 4.12 The corporate complaints/suggestions procedure is advertised on the website and in the Register Office, where forms are available. Three complaints have been received in the past year. These were dealt with, and resolved by, the Superintendent Registrar in line with the corporate procedures.

Customer Focus

Customer Care

- 4.13 During the inspection, officers were observed as being both courteous and professional when dealing with the public either face to face or over the telephone. At the end of some of the registrations observed customers commented on the good service provided. A mystery shopping exercise reinforced these observations with the staff described as knowledgeable, friendly, and efficient. However, advice given about a death registration was given briskly leaving the recipient in some doubt as to the correct course of action.

Customer information and literature

- 4.14 Sound verbal advice is given. Officers are well versed in registration procedures and are confident when imparting knowledge and instruction to customers. When in doubt, staff double check with colleagues to ensure the correct advice is given.
- 4.15 The waiting areas contain information on registering births and deaths, bereavement, probate, marriages, civil partnerships, naming ceremonies, renewal of vows, and the complaints procedure. Notices advertising fees are posted in the reception area and in registrars' offices.

SERVICE DELIVERY ASSESSMENT

4 (continued)

4.16 There is further information and advice pertaining to registration services on the council's website. The registration pages accessed using the search facility, or found under Community & Living, provide general information and advice on most of the services provided by the office. Information includes the opening hours and contact number of the Register Office, and website links to neighbouring registration districts' websites. **However, we recommend that information on the web site is expanded to include information on the declaration facility, coroner's involvement in some deaths, and a link to the separate citizenship pages.**

Contacting the office

4.17 During business hours all incoming telephone calls from the public go through to the Register Office. They are answered by general office staff who make birth and death registration appointments using the manual diary system. It was observed during the inspection and the mystery shopping exercise that the line is frequently engaged and although there is an answer phone there was no facility to leave a message. Outside of business hours a voice message advises callers of the opening hours but does not provide an emergency out of hours contact number. **It is recommended that the current telephone system is reviewed and arrangements put in place to enable customers to more easily contact the office. The out of hours emergency contact number should be included in the answer phone message.**

Facilities and access

4.18 Most of the Register Office accommodation is at ground floor level, although there are two offices used for citizenship administration on the lower ground floor. Public access to the Register Office is at the front of the Register Office via a few steps. There is a ramp for disabled access and push chairs. On arrival, customers are welcomed by the Registration Officer who sits in an office separated from the entrance hall by a counter and hatch.

4.19 Public toilets, including one with facilities for disabled customers, are available on the lower ground floor level, which can be accessed by a side door at street level. There is also a ladies toilet on the first floor with baby changing facilities and a separate baby feeding area close by.

4.20 The decommissioned ceremony room, the Victorian Room, and an adjoining waiting area are situated across the corridor from reception, where customers attending for ceremonies are directed. The ceremony room, which can hold up to 50 people, is tastefully decorated and furnished. There are local authority maintained gardens to the side of the office which offer an attractive setting for photograph opportunities.

4.21 Birth registration informants are also directed by reception staff to the waiting area next to the ceremony room. If there are a large number of guests waiting for a ceremony to begin they will be invited to sit in the smaller waiting room near the interview offices, normally dedicated to death registration customers.

4.22 The interview offices are close to reception. The registrars' offices are fairly compact but fit for purpose. The Superintendent Registrar's office is larger and available to be used for conducting ceremonies at the statutory fee. The office strong room is situated in the basement.

SERVICE DELIVERY ASSESSMENT

4 (continued)

- 4.23 There is a hearing loop in the Victorian Room for customers with hearing difficulties. Birth and death registrations can be taken in the Victorian Room if necessary.
- 4.24 The accommodation has not been decorated for some time and as a result is a little tired. In March the Register Office accommodation is to undergo a programme of complete redecoration. We support the local authority's plans to refurbish the office.

Service availability

- 4.25 The published opening hours of the Register Office are as follows:

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday/Sunday |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 09.00 – 13.00 14.00 – 16.30 | 09.00 – 13.00 14.00 – 16.30 | 09.00 – 13.00 | 09.00 – 13.00 14.00 – 16.30 | 09.00 – 13.00 14.00 – 16.30 | By appointment for ceremonies |

- 4.26 Hounslow operate an appointment service for birth, still-birth and death registrations/declarations and notices of marriage/civil partnerships. The office closes over the lunchtime period and on a Wednesday afternoon when citizenship ceremonies take place. The office offers early morning appointments on Thursdays and Fridays from 08.00 and late evening appointments on Thursdays until 18.15 for birth and death registrations and Notices of Marriage/Civil Partnership. Appointments can also be made between 10.00 and 14.00 on a Saturday. No public consultation has taken place in relation to service accessibility. Hounslow is one of the few London boroughs that closes for business over the lunchtime period and the only one which doesn't offer full Monday to Friday service. **We strongly recommend that the service availability is reviewed so that registration falls in line with other public-facing services within the borough and to determine whether the service is meeting the community's needs.**
- 4.27 Customers can apply for certificates through the post, or in person. The public are able to pay for registration services using cash or cheque. To widen the choice for customers **the local authority should look to offer a credit/debit card facility. Other districts also offer an on-line certificate application facility and Hounslow may wish to consider extending the service to include on-line applications.**
- 4.28 The district offers couples a wide range of choice with regard venues, times, vows, readings and music. Group citizenship ceremonies are usually held in the Civic Centre, although smaller, and private, ceremonies have been held in the Victorian Room. In addition to statutory services, the district offers Naming Ceremonies, Renewal of Vows, and a Nationality Checking Service. A translation service can also be provided by the local authority if required.

ORGANISATION AND TECHNICAL QUALITY

5

Quality and Organisation of Work

- 5.1 The Proper Officer is the Borough Solicitor with strategic responsibility for registration. The Superintendent Registrar has overall responsibility for management of the office, reporting directly to him. Her role involves staff and budget management, organising the rota, maintaining the Register of Approvals, and local authority liaison. There are four registrars of births and deaths, two of whom are part-time covering one post in a job sharing capacity. The general office is run by two additional registrars, one of whom is part-time, and a support officer. The staff in Hounslow provide an effective service, working together in a co-operative, cohesive manner.
- 5.2 The “Marriage Office” is managed by the Superintendent Registrar. There are excellent procedures in place with documentation fully labelled and filed in a systematic fashion. Paperwork is thoroughly processed and safeguards built into the system to ensure all documentation is in place before authorities are issued. An additional six Deputy Superintendent Registrars assist in taking Notices of Marriage/Civil Partnership and act as celebrants at ceremonies.

Standard of Technical Work and Competence

- 5.3 The overall standard of technical work within the register office is high. Detailed findings on the technical side of the work can be found at Appendix B (for duties undertaken by Registrars of Births and Deaths) and Appendix C (for duties undertaken by a Superintendent Registrar). **These appendices include a short list of development needs which should be taken forward by the Superintendent Registrar and Training Officer (paragraphs 5.5 to 5.10).**

Births and Deaths

- 5.4 Registrars give a comprehensive overview of the registration process thereby ensuring that informants understand proceedings. Sound advice was provided on certificates, place of birth conventions, and order of preference for death informants. Customers were always given the opportunity to ask further questions at the end of registrations. The quality of register entries is excellent.
- 5.5 The loose-leaf registers were found to be in a good condition with pages in sequential order. Corrections had been actioned appropriately.
- 5.6 During the inspection period, it was noted that the RON (registration on-line) system for births and deaths was generally performing to an acceptable standard. It is treated as a priority system by the local authority’s IT department.
- 5.7 The registrars carry out nominated officer duties for a month at a time on a rota basis. The duties covered include birth requisitions, incoming birth declarations, death registrations from coroner’s paperwork, birth re-registration applications, walk-in registrations, and dealing with telephone queries.

ORGANISATION AND TECHNICAL QUALITY

5 (continued)

Marriages and civil partnerships

- 5.8 Observations of registrars attesting notices of marriage and conducting pre-marriage interviews revealed a good standard of questioning. Good advice is given and processes and legal implications explained clearly. However all staff taking notices should establish the couple's legal capacity to marry prior to the individual's notice being taken.
- 5.9 Ceremonies are professionally delivered, enhancements routinely offered and, where legally possible, tailored according to the wishes of the couple. It is good practice for celebrants to introduce themselves by name and role at the outset of the ceremony but this was not generally observed.
- 5.10 The marriage registers contain a large number of clerical errors, although these were identified at the time of registration and corrected. These were largely made by inexperienced members of staff. **It is recommended that the situation is monitored and further training provided as necessary to reduce the high error rate.**

Systems and Processes

Reception

- 5.11 Three staff, two full-time and one part-time, cover reception and general office duties. The duties involve answering the telephone, meeting and greeting customers, booking appointments for birth and death registrations and notices of marriage/civil partnership, dealing with certificate applications, and entering Notices of Marriage in the Notice Book.

Appointment and Diary system

- 5.12 A manual diary system is utilised to record appointments for birth and death registrations, notices of marriage/civil partnership and in-district ceremonies. Bookings for weddings and civil partnerships can be made up to a year in advance. There are plans to introduce an automated booking system which will also help the office to formally monitor its performance.

Requisitioning

- 5.13 There is a set office procedure in place for birth requisitioning. This follows the national model with mothers being chased informally at four weeks and then formally again after 42 days (if required). In Hounslow this process is carried out by the nominated officer.
- 5.14 The registrars are pro-active in ensuring that all deaths (when known) are registered by contacting the Patients' Affairs office at the hospital. Paperwork is faxed from the coroner's office to the Superintendent Registrar who checks the diary for appointments and passes paperwork to the relevant registrar.

ORGANISATION AND TECHNICAL QUALITY

5 (continued)

Statutory Returns

- 5.15 One of the Registrar of Births and Deaths is responsible for progressing the marriage returns relating to the clergy and authorised persons. There is good record keeping and pro-active chasing when required.
- 5.16 Quarterly Certified Copies (QCCs) are submitted in a timely fashion. A deputy usually checks the copies and in her absence the Superintendent Registrar takes over the process.

Certificate applications

- 5.17 All certificate applications are date stamped and filed, although not logged. An inspection of a sample of filed paperwork provided the analysis for certificate turnaround but a central **logging system would enable process time to be easily monitored and we recommend that a formal system is introduced.**

Correspondence and documentation

- 5.18 Post is opened by the general office staff and passed to the appropriate officer for action, or passed directly to the officer if personally addressed. Evidence is in place to show that correspondence and corrections are dealt with quickly and efficiently. Although correspondence is date stamped not all documentation received by the register office is date stamped or logged, eg inquest forms and declarations, and as a result some of the service standards can not be accurately monitored. Therefore, **we recommend that all incoming paperwork is date stamped and logged so that a clear audit trail is in place.**

Citizenship Ceremonies

- 5.19 The administration of Citizenship Ceremonies is undertaken within the registration service. There are effective procedures in place with new citizens being offered a ceremony within 90 days (the national requirement). It was reported that notification of the ceremony taking place is sent to the Home Office within a few days, although there was no evidence to support this. **We recommend that the notification date is recorded to provide an audit trail.**
- 5.20 Citizenship Ceremonies take place weekly in the Civic Centre or Victorian Room. The Superintendent Registrar or a deputy conducts the ceremony with the Mayor giving a speech. Refreshments are served and a spoon is given as a gift. During the inspection a ceremony in the Register Office was observed. The checking-in process and ceremony were managed smoothly and efficiently. Shortly before the ceremony, staff learned that the Mayor would be late and decided not to delay proceedings, improvising well, with the Superintendent Registrar covering the Mayor's role. Feedback forms completed after the ceremony indicated that customers found the experience uplifting and the staff friendly and professional.

ORGANISATION AND TECHNICAL QUALITY

5 (continued)

Approved Premises

5.21 Legal Services has overall responsibility for the licensing of approved premises although most of the administrative process is carried out by the Superintendent Registrar. There are effective procedures in place to ensure the proper licensing of premises. A year before the expiry date an automated reminder is generated and a letter sent to the venue, followed up after six months with a telephone call. There are currently 11 premises licensed which offer a good variety of venues for ceremonies.

Training and Service Development

5.22 The Superintendent Registrar is responsible for the day to day management of the service. One of the registrars is the dedicated training officer. There is a systematic process in place to ensure comprehensive training is provided, the benefits of which are borne out by the quality of the work and consistent approach. Training is being carried out so that the office has multi-skilled staff able to cover all roles. The local authority's performance management system has been adopted and the Superintendent Registrar carries out performance reviews. Staff meetings take place every two weeks which cover personnel related issues, technical developments, office performance feedback, work allocation, and any other issues staff would like to discuss.

5.23 The Superintendent Registrar and Training Officer have recently begun to attend the Regional Training Group Meetings. There has been a recent review of training arrangements at the national level. The regional group links into the national forum and this group provides a valuable source of information.

5.24 The Local Authority is rarely represented at the meetings of the London Regional Managers Group. The Superintendent Registrar has attended when the date does not coincide with monthly Senior Management Team meetings. In recent times there have been a number of changes in legislation which impact on the way local authorities can run the service. Issues such as these are discussed at this forum and **we recommend that arrangements are made so that regular attendance is possible.**

SECURITY AND STOCK CONTROL

6

Stock and Accounts

- 6.1 A separate stock inspection carried out found that there is good stock control. Stock which is currently in use by the Registrars of Births and Deaths is kept in the office during the day and in the strong room at night with the unused and pandemic stock. The Superintendent Registrar's current stock is kept in the general office while the unused stock is kept in the strong room. A detailed check of the certificate stock on site was made against the records held by General Register Office and all was accountable.
- 6.2 Certificate counterfoils are completed as stock is issued. Record of Issue books are filed for easy reference. In line with council instruction all used stock is reconciled against income on a daily basis and banked appropriately. Manual cash books are in operation for the registrar's fees. Sound procedures are in place to deal with the flow of money and banking instructions have been issued to staff.

Register Control

- 6.3 Current registers are appropriately secured in the registrars' safes or the strong room. The final bound registers were found to have been closed appropriately with blank entries formally cancelled. The historic registers are in good condition. They are appropriately indexed and filed in the strong room where they are easily accessed for certificate production by reception staff.

General Security

- 6.4 The reception is permanently manned during opening hours and all visitors are seen as they arrive at reception. All interview rooms and the general office are access controlled with a digital code needed to gain entry.
- 6.5 The Notice Board, which shows marriage/civil partnership notices, is situated in the corridor close to one of the waiting areas. The Notices are displayed in unlocked glass fronted cabinets. **As unescorted customers use the area it is recommended that the cabinets are made more secure.**
- 6.6 The strong room is situated in the basement. The historic records are kept on metal shelving, and are kept in an environment which meets the General Register Office repository specifications. It is easily accessed and facilitates a smooth certificate production procedure.

APPENDIX

A COMPLIANCE WITH THE GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

1. The table below shows how Hounslow compares against the national standards within the Good Practice Guide

GPG section 2. Application of Code of Practice

| Key Activity | National Standard | Standard within Hounslow |
|---|--|---|
| 2.1 Consultation | Local service delivery plans to be informed through annual consultation with customers, staff and partners. | Non-compliant – <i>no formal engagement with the public has taken place.</i> |
| 2.2 Service Delivery and Improvement Plan | Publication of Service Delivery Plan (SDP) reflecting the needs and expectations of local customers, and the rights of the general public. | Compliant – <i>Service Delivery Plan in place. Consultation carried out with staff and stakeholders</i> |
| 2.3 Performance Management and Reporting | Local systems to be in place to monitor performance and customer satisfaction rates, and the results made publicly available. | Non-Compliant – <i>Customer surveys carried out but monitoring standards not in place and first results will be published in April 2009.</i> |

GPG section 3. Organisation

| Key Activity | National Standard | Standard within Hounslow |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| 3.1 Customer Satisfaction | 85% or more of customers satisfied | Compliant – <i>Results to date show a high level of satisfaction</i> |
| 3.2 Suggestions and complaints | A well publicised, easy to use suggestions and complaints procedure. | Compliant – <i>Corporate system in place accessed through the LA website and advertised at the Register Office.</i> |
| | Summary of suggestions and complaints published, together with the improvements made as a result. | Non-Compliant – <i>Results not published</i> |
| | Number of formal complaints received fewer than 0.5% of all registrations | Compliant – <i>Three complaints received within the last 12 months</i> |
| 3.3 Service Points | Location of service points to take account of consultation with partners, staff, users and potential users of the service, and to reflect their needs | Non-compliant – <i>currently one service point in place for core registration service. Discussions under way with local hospital but no consultation carried out with the public</i> |
| 3.4 Service and access availability | Service to be easily accessible and available to users at reasonable times, taking into account customer preferences and expectations | Non-Compliant – <i>Office shut between 13.00 and 14.00</i> |
| 3.5 Accommodation | Private interview rooms for registration and notice taking and public waiting area. | Compliant – <i>Four private interviewing rooms are available at the Register Office and one at the outstation</i> |
| | Marriage/ceremony room available at statutory fee for 6-20 people | Compliant – <i>Superintendent Registrar's room available at the statutory fee</i> |
| 3.6 Approved Premises | Applications for approval processed according to statutory requirements | Compliant |
| | Local Authority register of approvals compiled and maintained according to statutory requirements | Compliant |

APPENDIX

A (continued)

| <i>Waiting times – offices with mixed appointment systems</i> | | |
|---|--|---|
| Key Activity | National Standard | Standard within Hounslow |
| 3.7 General | Customers without appointment should be allowed to complete their business that day if they attend within advertised opening hours and choose to wait. | Compliant – <i>Appointments available with nominated officer during the day</i> |
| | 90% of customers seen within 10 minutes of appointed time. | Compliant – <i>Customers' arrival and seen time logged and observations during fieldwork suggest standard is being met</i> |
| 3.8 Births | 90% of customers offered an appointment to register (or make a declaration) within 3 working days of request. | Compliant |
| 3.9 Still-births and deaths | 90% of customers offered an appointment to register (or make an declaration in the case of a death) within 2 working days of request | Compliant |
| 3.10 Marriages and civil partnerships | 90% of people able to give notice offered an appointment within 5 days of request | Compliant |
| | Marriage and civil partnership notices to be taken in sufficient time to allow the event to take place as planned (subject to legal constraints). | Compliant |
| 3.11 Time and venue for civil marriages and partnerships | Bookings made up to 12 months in advance. | Compliant |
| 3.12 Arranging citizenship ceremonies | 100% of prospective citizens offered a date to attend a citizenship ceremony at no extra cost within 90 days of the Home Office invitation letter. | Compliant – <i>citizens offered date to attend within GPG standards.</i> |

GPG section 4. Birth Registration

| Key Activity | National Standard | Standard within Hounslow |
|--|--|--|
| 4.1 Registering births | All births registered | Compliant |
| 4.2 Timely and accurate recording of births | 98% registered within 42 days of event. | Compliant – <i>Excluding declarations and re-registrations 99% achieved</i> |
| 4.3 Requisition unregistered births | Requisition procedures followed for 100% of unregistered births. | Compliant – <i>informal requisition commences at 4 weeks with formal requisitioning carried out after 42 days</i> |
| 4.4 Declarations | Declaration facility available. | Compliant |
| | Completed declarations sent to receiving authority on the same day. | Non-Compliant – <i>No evidence since the introduction of RON</i> |
| | 90% of declarations registered within 24 hours of receipt. | Compliant |
| 4.5 Timely and accurate corrections and re-registrations | 90% offered appointment within 7 working days of GRO notification. | Compliant |
| 4.6 Collection of statistics | All statistical information to be identified, requested and recorded where supplied. | Compliant |

APPENDIX

A (continued)

GPG section 5. Still-Birth Registration

| Key Activity | National Standard | Standard within Hounslow |
|---|---|--------------------------|
| 5.1 Still-births | All still-births registered. | Compliant |
| 5.2 Timely and accurate recording of still-births | 98% registered within 42 days of event. | Compliant |
| 5.3 Burial/cremation documents issued | All relevant documents issued at the appropriate time. | Compliant |
| 5.4 Collection of statistics | All statistical information to be identified, requested and recorded where supplied | Compliant |

GPG section 6. Death Registration

| Key Activity | National Standard | Standard within Hounslow |
|--|--|--|
| 6.1 Registering deaths | All deaths registered. | Compliant |
| 6.2 Timely and accurate recording of deaths. | 98% of deaths (excluding inquests) registered within 5 days of the death. | Non-compliant – <i>excluding declarations 93% achieved</i> |
| | 90% of inquest cases registered on day of receipt of coroner's certificate. | Compliant - <i>inquest form is not date stamped, but evidence suggests standard is being met.</i> |
| 6.3 Deaths referred to coroner | All reportable deaths referred to the coroner prior to the registration | Compliant – <i>Form 52s issued</i> |
| 6.4 Burial/cremation documents issued | All relevant documents issued at the appropriate time. | Compliant |
| 6.5 Declarations | Declaration facility available. | Compliant |
| | Completed declarations sent to receiving authority on the same day. | Non-Compliant – <i>No evidence.</i> |
| | 90% of declarations registered on day of receipt. | Compliant |
| 6.6 Timely and accurate corrections | 90% offered appointment within 7 working days of GRO notification | Compliant |
| 6.7 Collection of statistics | All statistical information to be identified, requested and recorded where supplied. | Compliant |

GPG section 7. Marriage/Civil Partnerships

| Key Activity | National Standard | Standard within Hounslow |
|--|---|--------------------------|
| 7.1 Availability of notice taking service for marriage or civil partnership. | 100% of all marriage and civil partnership notices to be taken in sufficient time to allow the event to take place as planned (subject to legal constraints). | Compliant |
| 7.2 Solemnisation of civil marriages and registration of civil partnerships. | Time and date of marriage ceremony/ civil partnership registration offered to meet request of couple where this is available. | Compliant |
| 7.3 Recording civil partnerships. | 100% of schedules entered within 2 working days of formation. | Compliant |
| 7.4 Timely and accurate corrections. | 90% of customers offered appointments within 7 working days of GRO notification. | Compliant |

APPENDIX

A (continued)

GPG section 8. Citizenship

| Key Activity | National Standard | Standard within Hounslow |
|---|---|--|
| 8.1 Dating Citizenship Certificates | 100% of certificates dated correctly and without amendment. | Compliant |
| 8.2 Notification to Home Office following a Citizenship Ceremony. | 100% of notifications confirming the ceremony sent to the Home Office within 14 working days of the ceremony. | Non-Compliant – <i>Reported that notifications are sent within a few days of ceremony but no evidence</i> |

GPG section 9. Statutory and administrative returns

| Key Activity | National Standard | Standard within Hounslow |
|---|---|--|
| 9.1 Quarterly and occasional copies | Quarterly copies prepared, certified and submitted within 28 days of the end of each quarter. | Compliant |
| | Occasional copies of corrected entries submitted within 7 days of correction being made. | Compliant |
| 9.2 Health Authority returns | Weekly returns made within 14 days. | Compliant |
| 9.3 Council returns | Deaths notified to council tax and electoral registration officer within 7 days. | Compliant |
| | Births notified to the Education Authority within statutory timescale (if required). | Compliant (<i>Not required</i>) |
| 9.4 Sham marriages and civil partnerships | Any suspected sham marriages and civil partnerships reported to the Home Office. | Compliant |

GPG section 10. Certificates and Document Management


| Key Activity | National Standard | Standard within Hounslow |
|---|--|---|
| 10.1 Issue of certificates (at the statutory fee) | Requests for certificates required urgently to be dealt with on the day. | Compliant |
| | 90% of applications dealt with within 5 working days of application. | Compliant – <i>applications document receipt and submission date</i> |
| 10.2 Records access | Statutory compliance. | Compliant |
| 10.3 Records custody and care | Registers stored to prevent deterioration and in accessible location. | Compliant |
| 10.4 Indexes | Indexes prepared to meet statutory requirements. | Compliant |

APPENDIX

B TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT OF RBDM DUTIES


The table below grades technical performance against the key activities within the registration process at an office-wide level. Where appropriate, development needs have been recorded.

Markings are as follows: 4 = *Fully compliant*; 3 = *Mostly compliant*; 2 = *Partly compliant*; 1 = *Non-compliant*

| PART 1: TECHNICAL ABILITY | <i>Mark</i> |  |
|--|-------------|---|
| <u>Births, Still-births and Deaths</u> | | |
| Relationships and qualification to register clearly established at outset | 4 | |
| Customers advised regarding parental responsibility and re-registration (where applicable) | 4 | |
| Questioning full and open throughout | 4 | |
| Names and aliases properly sought and recorded | 4 | |
| Age and marital condition properly sought and recorded | 4 | |
| Places and addresses properly collected and recorded | 4 | |
| Detailed recording of occupations (expanded where required) | 3 | |
| Statistical questions properly introduced and explained to customers | 4 | |
| All statistical data collected | 4 | |
| Review of Information: Details checked by informants and correctly signed off | 4 | |
| Appropriate birth and death documentation issued and explained at end of registration | 4 | |
| Loose-leaf register in order | 4 | |
| Associated paperwork in order: Greens, F111s, CONL | 4 | |
| Form 52 properly issued to Coroner | 4 | |
| Statutory returns actioned appropriately | 4 | |
| Declaration process actioned appropriately | 4 | |
| Correct procedures followed for all types of corrections | 4 | |
| Birth, Still-birth and Death QCCs actioned in accordance with GRO instruction | 4 | |
| Proficiency level in use of the RON system | 4 | |
| Efficient time management at registration interviews | 4 | |
| Office supported by reliable filing and follow up systems | 3 | |
| Handbook and other official publications are up to date | 4 | |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <u>Marriage</u> | | |
| Marriage Authorities checked for validity | 4 | |
| Wedding couples clearly established at outset at pre-marriage interview | 4 | |
| Questioning full and direct throughout | 4 | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Amendments to couple's details recorded on reverse of their own authority | 3 |
| Register entry not started until declaratory and contracting words are spoken | 4 |
| Correct details entered in register (include pencil signatures in margin) | 2 |
| Review of Information: Details checked by parties and correctly signed off | 4 |
| Marriage Register in good order | 2 |
| Correct procedures followed for all types of corrections | 4 |
| Associated paperwork in order: Widow Cards | 3 |
| Marriage QCCs actioned in accordance with GRO instruction | 4 |
| Marriage indexing is up to date | 4 |

| PART 2: COMMUNICATION AND CUSTOMER FOCUS | <i>Mark</i> |  |
|---|-------------|---|
| Registrars gave clear introduction by name and designation | 4 | 4 |
| Registrars' name plate/label badge clearly visible to public | na | na |
| Registrars are appropriately dressed | 4 | 4 |
| Office environment is suitable for interview | 4 | 4 |
| Registrars gave clear overview of registration process at outset | 4 | 4 |
| Customers kept informed as interview progressed | 4 | 4 |
| Customers given advice regarding forms and certificates issued | 4 | 4 |
| Customers given further advice where appropriate | 4 | 4 |
| Registrars summarised options and outcomes and recapped on documentation issued | 4 | 4 |
| Customers invited to ask questions | 4 | 4 |
| Customers appropriately escorted within office | 4 | 4 |
| Polite and courteous delivery | 4 | 4 |
| Clear and concise communication | 4 | 4 |

Key Development needs

1. The number of copying errors in the marriage registers should be reduced
2. Full occupational descriptions to be recorded – examples in the register entries of company director, teacher, administrator

APPENDIX

C TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT OF SR DUTIES

The table below grades technical performance against the key activities within the registration process at an office-wide level. Where appropriate, development needs have been recorded.

Markings are as follows: 4 = *Fully compliant*; 3 = *Mostly compliant*; 2 = *Partly compliant*; 1 = *Non-compliant*

| PART 1: TECHNICAL ABILITY | <i>Mark</i> | ↓ |
|--|-------------|---|
| Preliminary questioning to ensure marriage/CP notice could be completed. | 3 | |
| Questioning full and properly directed throughout. | 4 | |
| Names, aliases and ages properly sought, checked and recorded. | 4 | |
| Condition properly checked and details recorded. | 4 | |
| Places, addresses and residency fully checked/recorded. | 4 | |
| Current marriage/CP venue thoroughly checked and details accurately recorded | 4 | |
| Occupations detailed - expanded as required. | 3 | |
| Relationships ascertained | 4 | |
| Nationality thoroughly checked | 4 | |
| Notice checked and serious nature impressed before signing | 4 | |
| Appropriate advice given regarding notice period and display. | 4 | |
| Comparison and information copy action accurately undertaken. | 4 | |
| Appropriate Notice declarations completed | 4 | |
| Notice Book completed accurately | 4 | |
| Marriage ceremony words clearly delivered and responded to | 4 | |
| Suspected sham marriages being reported to the Home Office | 4 | |
| Efficient time management at notices and/or marriages | 4 | |
| Complies with statutory obligations at citizenship ceremonies | 4 | |
| Notices on Notice Board in order | 4 | |

| PART 2: COMMUNICATION AND CUSTOMER FOCUS | |
|---|----|
| SRs gave clear introduction by name and designation | 3 |
| SRs name plate/label badge clearly visible to public | na |
| SRs are appropriately dressed | 4 |
| Office environment is suitable for interview | 4 |
| SRs gave clear overview of notice/marriage process at outset | 4 |
| Customers kept informed as notice interview progressed | 4 |
| Customers given advice regarding documentation and next stage in marriage process | 4 |

| | |
|--|---|
| Customers given further advice where appropriate | 4 |
| SRs summarised options and outcomes and recapped on documentation issued | 4 |
| Customers invited to ask questions | 4 |
| Customers appropriately escorted within office | 4 |
| Polite and courteous delivery | 4 |
| Clear and concise communication | 4 |
| Good voice projection at ceremony | 4 |
| Good management of ceremonial proceedings | 4 |

Key Development needs

1. Ensure CP schedule issue date is always noted on the reverse of Notices
2. Establish couples legal capacity to marry before taking the first Notice