

South Tyneside Registration District

Service Delivery Plan

April 2012 to March 2013



South Tyneside Council

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1. Statement of level of service

South Tyneside registration Service aims to provide an outstanding service to our customers. This will be achieved by consistently meeting the standards set out in the Guide to good practice in the delivery of the local registration service.

South Tyneside Registration Service provides a range of statutory services:

- an appointment based service for birth, death and still-birth registrations
- an appointment based service for taking notices of marriage and civil partnerships and booking future ceremonies up to 18 months in advance
- administration of the approval process for premises wanting to be a venue for ceremonies
- the care and custody of registers and the provision of indexes to the registers
- the issue of certificates from deposited registers
- the provision of citizenship ceremonies

As well as statutory services we also offer some non-statutory services:

- baby naming ceremonies
- renewal of vows ceremonies

We have published a set of service standards, which set out the level of service our customers can expect from us:

- Our reception desk will see customers within 5 minutes
- Letters and e-mails will be acknowledged within 5 working days
- We will respond to a formal complaint within 8 working days. If we need more time to deal with a complaint we will contact our customer within the 8 working days to let them know what's happening
- We will see 95% of our customers with appointments within 10 minutes of their appointment time
- If a customer does not have an appointment, we will tell them how long they will have to wait until they are able to see a registrar
- We will arrange an appointment to give notice of marriage or a civil partnership within 5 working days for 95% of our customers
- We will arrange an appointment to register a birth within 5 working days for 90% of our customers

- We will arrange an appointment to register a death within 2 working days for 95% of our customers
- We will arrange an appointment to register a still birth within 2 working days for 95% of our customers
- We will issue 90% of copy certificates from our reception within 30 minutes
- We will issue 95% of urgent requests for certificates on the same day
- We will issue 95% of certificate applications by post within 7 working days

Our Commitment

We remain committed to achieving the current national standards and will adopt any new standards that are brought in during the coming year.

South Tyneside has performed well when compared against the key performance indicators in 2011/12 and we aim to maintain all of our current levels.

2. South Tyneside registration team

Current staffing structure:



In addition to the core staffing there is history and an ongoing commitment to provide support from the wider team. This includes support from the Election side of the Team in the provision of citizenship ceremonies and assistance with the indexing project.

There is also considerable support given through the provision of systems for recording of all income received through comprehensive spreadsheets and monitoring of the good practice guide.

3. Location and service access

The South Tyneside Registration District covers the whole of the local authority area of South Tyneside Council.

Service location

The Registration Service is housed in the Register Office, which is on Broughton Road, South Shields. It is opposite the Town Hall, the main administrative centre of South Tyneside Council and home to a large customer service centre, which the Council has created, so that customers can access a range of face-to-face services in one place. The office fully complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, has a hearing loop system throughout and provides comfortable modern facilities for all of our customers.

The building is all on one level and provides the following:

- a ceremony room which can accommodate up to 75 guests
- a ceremony room which can accommodate up to 30 guests and be used for indoor photographs
- a large, modern, dedicated waiting area for ceremonies
- an extensive garden area for photographs
- a bride/partner room
- office accommodation comprising rooms for:
 - Superintendent Registrar
 - Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages
 - Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages
 - General Office accommodation for three staff
 - An additional office for contingencies

- a waiting room for birth, death and ceremony appointments
- a reception and waiting area for day to day customers
- a strong room which contains all registers for South Tyneside
- a baby change/nursing mothers room
- public toilet facilities
- staff kitchen facilities
- staff toilet facilities

Service access

The office is open Monday to Friday – 9.00 am to 4.00 pm and operates an appointment system. It is also open on Saturday morning - 10.00 am to 1.00 pm, for ceremonies.

South Tyneside Council operates an emergency out of hour's service, with all telephone calls going to the Customer Contact Centre which has 24 hour opening. This number is **427 7000**. The Customer Contact Centre has contact telephone numbers for the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent Registrar, who will respond to any emergency calls.

Since the introduction of approved premises for ceremonies the service has been privileged to be able to offer their expertise in five locations.

- Town Hall, South Shields
- Hedworth Hall, South Shields
- The Dunes, South Shields
- Littlehaven Hotel, South Shields
- Town Hall, Jarrow

These venues, which are licensed for marriages and civil partnerships in the district, offer a varied customer choice and have proved themselves to be very popular with both staff and our customers.

Complaints procedure

All suggestions and complaints are dealt with in an appropriate manner. The service utilises the Council's corporate complaints procedure and this is publicised extensively in all council buildings and on the website. It can be accessed on-line as well as by completing the relevant forms.

4. What did we do in 20011/12

The Registration Team holds monthly meetings to discuss service issues and to enable managers to keep the Team up to date with events happening in the Council and elsewhere that may have a potential impact. The Management Team also meets on a monthly basis and performance monitoring is one of the key focus issues. Members of the Management Team attend the Democratic Services Management meetings as well as the Proper Officer Group and in this way we are able to keep up to date with all key issues.

Partnership working

Hawthorne Arts

In September 2009 we entered into a contract with a local arts group, Hawthorne Arts, to promote art by providing wall space to showcase local artists.

This ongoing collaboration continues to benefit the Register Office by providing interesting pieces of art, which have provided a focal point in our ceremony suite.

Customer contact centre

We have continued to work with our Customer Contact Centre and this partnership goes from strength to strength.

There are a number of benefits from having birth and death appointments made by the contact centre.

- the registration team has more time available to concentrate on other work, which means that they are more able to achieve the targets that have been set
- the public has access to an appointments service outside of normal office hours and this now operates 24 hours each day
- General office staff now use the customer relationship management system to book appointments for civil partnerships and marriages
- the customer relations management software is able to provide statistics in relation to the good practice guide targets for availability of appointments
- the contact centre can continue to grow and provide an excellent service across the council

- the contact centre will be key to the introduction of Tell us Once (details below)

Coroner

We have continued to work with the Coroner to provide accommodation for inquests and this has worked well for all concerned.

It provides high quality accommodation for the Coroner, income for our service and gets more people into and familiar with our building.

Training

Our Training Officer has attended a number of meetings of our regional training group, Networks and is a well established member, representing South Tyneside.

Tell Us Once

We have worked with the Department of Work and Pensions and looked at the providing Tell Us Once from the Registration Service.

This has gone through the Council's approval process and we are in a position to be taking this forward during 2012/13.

Other notable achievements

Indexes on the internet

Valerie Craig, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages has been leading on a project to make all of our historical indexes available to the public on the internet. Valerie has been helped with this project by a number of volunteers from a South Tyneside local history group and our Web Team. The project has been going strong since 2004. Indexes for births and deaths are now available from 1837 up to 1974 and marriages from 1837 to 2006.

The project is nearing completion and has already proved to be a great benefit to both our staff and our customers.

De-commissioning of the Barrington Suite

The Barrington Suite was de-commissioned on 1 October 2010. During 2011/12 we held 75 ceremonies in the Barrington Suite which generated additional income for the service.

The Suffolk Garden Room was still available at the statutory rate and 121 ceremonies were held here during the same time period. The service is still able to deliver ceremonies in accommodation classed as 'good practice' by the General Register Office.

Customer Feedback

In May and November we carried out a survey of customers, to find out what they thought of our service.

This helped to reassure us that our customers thought that the service was performing well. The survey did not highlight any cause for concern, but did result in some very positive customer feedback. The survey results are available here:

<http://www.southtyneside.info/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=12568&p=0>

Baby naming and renewal of vows ceremonies

We have worked on the production of an in-house service for the provision of these non-statutory ceremonies. Stationery and scripts have been drafted and are in the design stage. A dedicated casual team member has been recruited to provide the ceremonies and we hope to be going live from October 2012.

Ceremony package for approved premises

We have streamlined the way we manage ceremonies for approved premises. This was achieved by re-designing and simplifying stationery, whilst maintaining a high level of service to our customers.

Reduction in staffing

Staffing provision was reduced from 2 full time equivalent registrars to 1.5 full time equivalent from April 2011. The service has been able to maintain the national standards relating to appointment times, which means that this reduction has not affected the level of service provision to our customers.

However, it has meant that the remaining staff are often fully booked and are having to juggle their administrative tasks.

5. Service development plan 2011/12 and 2012/13

Key to table			
			Achieved objective
			Ongoing objective
			New objective
Service objectives	By	When	Achieved/ ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the reduction in staff and assess any impact on service delivery 	JT/VS	Ongoing in 2011/12	March 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with IT and Web Team to introduce secure on-line payments system 	VS	March 2012	March 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with IT and Web Team to introduce an on-line appointment system 	VS	March 2012	March 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek legal advice on the vires of the additional charges currently levied for certificates from deposited registers. 	VS/Legal	September 2011	September 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider demand and scope to provide extended opening by incorporating a question in the next customer survey to enable us to assess demand for extended opening 	VS	November 2011	November 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocate staffing resources to complete the indexing project 	VS/VC/JT	March 2012	March 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote our services by extending the use of the promotional DVD to website and other screens across the Council 	VS	July 2011	July 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide baby naming and renewal of vows ceremonies in-house 	JT	November 2011	October 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the implications of Tell us Once and deliver report to management team 	JT/VS	August 2011	November 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a ceremony package for approved premises in line with de-commissioned the Barrington Suite 	JT	September 2011	May 2012

• Include all registration staff in the Council's performance development programme	VS/JT/VC	October 2011	March 2013
• Deliver Tell Us Once	VS/JT	October 2012	
• Look at the impact of the introduction of the new medical examiner	VS/JT/MH	March 2012	

Overall

Generally, we feel that we have consolidated our service during this year. There is still a lot of work to be done in some areas, but we continue to be confident that everything is moving in the right direction.

6. Key Performance Indicators 2011/12

1. Events registered within the statutory timescale			
Births	% registered within 42 days	99%	
Still births	% registered within 42 days	86%	
Deaths	% registered within 5 days	98%	
2. Waiting times for appointment			
Births	% available within 3 days of request	95%	Customer relationship management system
Still birth and death	% available within 2 days of request	99%	See above
Marriage and civil partnership	% available within 5 days of request	100%	See above
Arrival for appointment			
All customers	% seen within 10 minutes of appointment time	99%	Monitored on an exceptions basis by staff taking in customers
3. Certificate applications			
All applications	% dealt with in 5 working days	100%	Electronic post book tracking certificate requests and issue dates
4. Customer satisfaction surveys			
All customers	% of satisfied customers	100%	Surveys conducted in May November
5. Complaints			
Only one formal complaint was received in 2011/12 through corporate complaints system			



