



Home Office

**Identity &
Passport Service**

REVIEW REPORT ON THE REGISTRATION SERVICE IN POWYS

**Local Government Delivery Partnership Unit
General Register Office
November 2010**

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INTRODUCTION

1

Background

1.1 The delivery and administration of civil registration is a partnership between local government and the General Register Office (part of the Identity and Passport Service). In 2007 registration officers became local authority employees. This, together with the creation of a new governance framework, provided local authorities with greater responsibility and opportunities to develop the delivery of local registration services. To date around 100 local authorities, including Powys, have adopted the new governance arrangements, and committed to the national Code of Practice/ Good Practice Guide (GPG).

1.2 The GRO Delivery Partnership Unit (DPU) works with local authorities to review and improve service standards and to progress the modernisation of civil registration. The unit also seeks to identify innovation and good practice within the service and to encourage its wider dissemination. For local authorities that have adopted the new governance arrangements, a system of self reporting through the submission of an Annual Performance Report to GRO is in place. To supplement this, the unit also undertakes bespoke reviews, the scope of which is agreed with individual local authorities.

1.3 Powys unified to form a single registration district and adopted a new governance scheme in April 2009. The annual performance report submitted in May 2010 for the period April 2009-March 2010 provided some reassurance as to service performance although no information relating to Key Performance monitoring was included. It was therefore agreed that a programmed New Governance Review of registration services would be beneficial.

Terms of Reference

1.4 The scope of the review process for Powys was agreed with the local authority at a meeting on the 30th July 2010. The terms of reference were:

- to examine the role of Llandrindod Wells register office as an administrative hub for county registration services, the efficacy of registration systems and processes and their functioning at individual service points
- to examine the service's Key Performance Indicator monitoring systems and service attainment against them
- to examine the customer journey whilst assessing the service and attainment against related GPG standards
- to examine register office plans against those held and approved by GRO
- to identify existing strengths and proffer recommendations for improvement
- to report on any other noteworthy issues which are identified during the review

Methodology

1.5 The review was conducted during 4th-8th October 2010 and it was agreed that field work examination would include the register office at Llandrindod Wells and service points in Brecon and Ystradgunlais. During the course of the review the following methods were used:

INTRODUCTION

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- examination of registration records, associated administrative procedures and documents
- conducting of a mystery shopping exercise
- examination of service appointment diaries, performance monitoring systems and information and service organisation
- general observations of the customer experience
- meetings with registration managers and other officers
- examination of reports and records via the Registration-on-Line (RON) system

Acknowledgement

1.6 The DPU would like to extend its thanks to all those who contributed to this review.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

2

Overview

2.1 Powys registration service has the largest geographical coverage in Wales and is centrally administered from the register office in Llandrindod Wells. Given the part-time nature of the service, customer choice and access to the service is, nevertheless, very good. The local authority having extended opening hours at service points across the county as part of its reorganisation of the service in 2009. Administrative systems and processes are fundamentally sound, although their consistent application across service points could be improved. There is also scope for improvement in the discharging of ancillary registration duties by officers at local service points. Service performance against key indicators is good, meeting or exceeding most standards.

Strengths

2.2 A number of strengths and good practice were identified in the areas reviewed:

- (i) Efficient administrative procedures established at the register office for the co-ordination of registration services across the county (see paragraphs 3.5; 3.9; 3.11; 3.14 and 3.23).
- (ii) Robust procedures established for the control of registers and security stock at service points reviewed (see paragraph 3.8).
- (iii) Regular staff forums and communication links established; use of regional training group (see paragraph 3.25).
- (iv) Performance against some key performance indicators exceed national standards (see paragraphs 4.6; 4.8; 4.10; 4.12).
- (v) Good levels of customer care and consistent results from mystery shopping exercise (see paragraphs 5.2 and 5.13).
- (vi) Good service point access/ availability and levels of office accommodation following unification (see paragraphs 5.5-5.8).

Recommendations

2.3 Some areas where action and development is required were also identified:

- (i) Improvements to the mechanism for reporting in-office waiting times should be introduced and staff should familiarise themselves with the system and associated requirements (see paragraphs 3.3; 4.7).
- (ii) An earlier check of ceremony documentation should be introduced ahead of ceremonies to allow for fresh notice to be given if anything is found to be amiss (see paragraphs 3.5 & 3.6).
- (iii) Procedures to avoid 'duality of function' by registration officers during RON certification and quarterly copy processing should be introduced (see paragraph 3.13).
- (iv) Form 52 should be used for all referrals to the coroner; notifications to statutory bodies should also be completed in line with GRO handbook instruction (see paragraphs 3.18; 3.21).
- (v) The local authority should seek legal advice on the powers available to it to charge a non-statutory priority fee for certificates required urgently (see paragraph 4.9).
- (vi) Annual survey results should be published at the register office, other main service points and on the registration pages of the web site (see paragraph 4.11).

ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

3

General

3.1 The Register Office in Llandrindod Wells acts as the administrative hub for the county registration service and co-ordinates a range of statutory and administrative functions for all service points. On a day-to-day basis the county is managed by the superintendent registrar/ registration service manager and three designated team leaders who oversee operational activities within their control at individual service points in Mid, North and South Powys.

Performance Monitoring and Reporting

3.2 Information relating to service attainment against the Good Practice Guide Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is detailed in chapter 4.

3.3 The only element of reporting for KPI monitoring purposes required from individual service points relates to in-office waiting times for customers. From April 2010, registration officers have been instructed to record, *by exception*, on the corporate e-diary system, occasions when customers have not been seen within ten minutes of their appointment time. In practice, at the service points visited we found that staff were not aware of the requirement to record such data nor were they familiar with the methodology for annotating exceptions on the e-diary system.

3.4 Analysis of the corporate diary across the full range of service points for the period April-August 2010 identified that no exceptions were recorded. Whilst this could be indicative of outstanding customer service, it is more likely that recording on the diary system has not been universally applied. This view is further supported by customer feedback that suggests that 85% of customers were seen within the national standard. It is important to ensure that the agreed monitoring mechanism is applied consistently and that appropriate records are maintained. In this respect, we recommend that staff are made familiar with the requirement and the process and that the submission of 'nil returns' to the superintendent registrar on a regular basis is introduced.

Marriage /Civil Partnership Systems and Processes

3.5 Notices of marriage/ civil partnerships are attested at the register office or the local service point of the customer's choice. The county policy is for each individual's notice to be taken separately in line with good practice recommended by GRO. All notices are displayed at the register office, which is notified by e-mail of notices attested at other service points. These are subsequently displayed in accordance with statutory requirements. On the due date, superintendent registrar certificates are printed at the register office or the appropriate service point - for retention until the ceremony or collection by the customer as appropriate. The register office will also post certificates to customers whose ceremonies are to take place outside Powys. Retained superintendent registrar certificates are filed by due date. However, no checks are made to confirm that documentation is in order ahead of ceremony dates, in time to allow fresh notices to be given should the need arise. In this respect we would recommend that more timely administrative checks across all service points be introduced.

3.6 At the other local service points visited the county policy of interviewing individuals separately is adhered to, as are the associated administrative processes. Copy notices are also displayed at local services points for customer convenience. Superintendent registrar certificates are again retained or collected by the customer as appropriate. The option for certificates to be posted is seldom used. Staff check superintendent registrar certificates ahead of ceremony dates but, again, do not allow sufficient time to allow for new notices to be taken if the need arose.

ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

3 *continued*

3.7 Following notice preliminaries and the issue of superintendent registrar certificates, “pay and discuss” meetings are generally arranged for customers where the content and structure of ceremonies are discussed and payments made. However, as some 40% of customers give notice out of district “pay and discuss” arrangements are usually conducted via the telephone/ e-mail with each local office. On a practical level, at the outstations visited, we found that “pay and discuss” interviews via the telephone or e-mail were common place and appear efficiently conducted with payments taken electronically.

3.8 Pre-ceremony interviews are undertaken in line with GRO handbook instructions and superintendent registrar’s certificates of marriage examined by registrars on the ceremony date. There is a consistent approach to the management of registers and stock insofar as they are collected from local repositories and returned at the end of each day’s ceremony programme.

3.9 For civil partnerships, schedules are printed ahead of ceremony dates with formations subsequently recorded on RON, certificates printed and schedules posted to GRO in line with GPG standards. Given the relatively small numbers (9 in 2009-10), service managers will wish to ensure that staff familiarise themselves as to the requirements around civil partnership as they arise.

3.10 The district has yet to report any suspicion of sham marriages (section 24 reports), but staff appear to be aware of the requirements in relation to these.

Approved Premises Licensing and Administrative Procedures

3.11 The granting and renewal of Approved Premises licenses by the local authority and the maintenance of the Approved Premise Register is administered by the superintendent registrar. An established application and renewal procedure ensures legislative compliancy and renewal notifications/ reminders are sent six months prior to expiry. An up-to-date venue list is maintained and cascaded to team leaders as appropriate; updates are also incorporated on the registration pages of the website. The Approved Premises listings held by GRO corresponds with the local district record. Team leaders have confirmed that they receive up-to-date approved venue listings.

Quarterly Copy and Uncertified Entry Certification and Processing

3.12 The checking of quarterly copies and the certification of RON entries is undertaken by the three designated team leaders at each local office on a regular basis. Supporting documentation is posted to GRO quarterly within the statutory deadline. The collation of Authorised Persons and Clergy returns is undertaken by designated registration officers within each local office (although in South Powys this process is completed by the designated team leader). The superintendent registrar retains overall control of the process and liaises with GRO on all related matters.

3.13 Fieldwork observations of certification processing identified an issue of ‘duality of functions’ whereby deputy superintendent registrars have occasionally certified entries for registrations they have conducted as deputy registrars of births and deaths. Where there is a conflict, arrangements should be put in place for another deputy superintendent registrar to certify such entries as prescribed in Regulation 9 (3) of the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Regulations 1968.

ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

3 *continued*

Citizenship Administration

3.14 Citizenship is co-ordinated centrally by the superintendent registrar at the register office. Due to the low volume of business (35 new citizens in 2009-10) only private ceremonies are offered at venues of the customer's choice. Once a venue has been confirmed, arrangements are made for a local deputy superintendent registrar to take administrative responsibility for the citizenship pack and co-ordinate the ceremony. Powys County Council is represented at each ceremony by the Chair or Deputy Chair of the local Shire Committee. On completion of the ceremony the deputy superintendent registrar notifies the register office via e-mail; paperwork is then completed centrally and despatched electronically to the Home Office. At the satellite offices visited we found a consistency of approach in line with the established practice administered from the register office.

REGISTRARS' SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

Inquests

3.15 Upon receipt of Coroner's Certificate after Inquest, deaths within 12 months are registered by the local registration officer or after 12 months in line with GRO handbook instructions, and associated audit trail maintained. Death certificates are issued in line with the county policy at £3.50 on the day of registration, £7 after 7 days and £9 when the register is deposited with the superintendent registrar.

Declarations

3.16 The processing of inward/ outward declarations is conducted in line with handbook instructions although volumes of inward declarations are extremely small. Conversely there are significant numbers of outward birth declarations processed (743 in 2009-10) due to the large maternity units located in the surrounding districts of Bridgend, Ceredigion, Herefordshire, Merthyr, Monmouthshire, Neath Port Talbot, Shropshire, Swansea and Wrexham. Of the sample of Form 218(W) examined, all outward declarations were found to have been sent on the declaration date in line with GPG standards.

Birth Requisitioning

3.17 Robust procedures are in place for the requisitioning of outstanding births which is conducted at the register office. Unregistered births are followed-up by the issue of an informal reminder at four weeks followed, if necessary, by formal requisitioning at six weeks. We are informed that requisitioning arrangements are being reviewed and it is likely that responsibility will be devolved to registration officers at local service points. In such circumstances, the local authority will wish to ensure that it retains sufficient oversight of this activity to ensure its timely completion.

Coronial Referrals

3.18 The DPU notes the local practice at some death registrations of making verbal referrals to the coroner, thus circumventing the use of Form 52 'Report of Death to Coroner'. Where registration officers make a telephone referral to the coroner, this should be followed up by the issue of Form 52 (Registration handbook D4 and GRO circular 2/2003 refers). The use of Form 52 and the associated counterfoil also provide an appropriate audit trail in all cases. Where there have been referrals to the coroner, we have observed a consistent approach at service points in that deaths are only registered upon receipt of a faxed Forms 100A or B.

ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

3 *continued*

Corrections

3.19 Typographical and simple clerical corrections are dealt with by local registration officers. All other corrections are referred to GRO. Of the limited samples examined all appeared to be processed in line with GRO handbook instructions and an audit trail of clearance was maintained.

Notification of Statutory Bodies

3.20 The expectation from the register office is that staff follow procedures as outlined in handbook instruction. It is therefore assumed that medical cards are destroyed after the NHS number has been entered on RON. Also that Forms BD8 'Notification of Death'; F111 'Notification of Deaths to Government Departments or Other Bodies' and F161 'Widows/ Widowers/ Surviving Civil Partners' are issued as appropriate following registration. Returns to local council tax authorities should be processed weekly; other electoral and education returns should be processed on an ad-hoc basis.

3.21 In practice at the offices visited, we established that notifications to council tax are made weekly, but no audit trail for the completion of returns relating to electoral and education authorities and to Local Safeguarding Children Boards exist. Moreover, examination of registers and supporting documentation indicated that the completion of Form 111s is sporadic and that some registration officers are not aware of the procedure for the issue of Form 161s. An examination of marriage registers confirmed that none of the latter had been issued as required.

Occasional Copies

3.22 Occasional copies of corrected entries in deposited registers are processed in line with GRO instructions by the superintendent registrar.

Indexing of Registers

3.23 When registers are centrally deposited at Llandrindod Wells, they are indexed by general office staff and retained in the central repository. Public access is by appointment only.

Correspondence Processing

3.24 An electronic log is maintained at the register office for the receipt and clearance of all correspondence, thus providing a full audit trail. Correspondence is dealt with in line with Powys County Council service standard guidelines (full response 10 days, acknowledgement in more complex cases within 5 days and subsequent full response within 20 days). We were informed that each service point has either access to an electronic log or a manual post book system for the maintenance of local correspondence audit trails. In practice at the offices visited, we found that staff had yet to migrate to the electronic log utilised by the register office. In addition there were no established mechanisms to record incoming correspondence only the use of 'post-out' books.

Staff and Wider Communication

3.25 All registration officers including casual staff have access to an individual e-mail address enabling routine communication via established e-mail groups. Quarterly team meetings are held in Newtown, Llandrindod Wells and Brecon attended by registration officers, deputies, team leaders and either the superintendent registrar or Proper Officer Representative.

ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

3 *continued*

Agendas are circulated ahead of meeting dates with minutes taken which are routinely cascaded to all staff. The district also utilises training opportunities offered by the South Wales Regional Training Group (SWRTG).

Strengths and Innovations	Areas for Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust procedures for the control of marriage registers and security stock at service points • Timely submission of civil partnership schedules onto RON and effective administration of Citizenship • Robust procedures in place for the administration of approved venue licences • Established procedures for the requisitioning of outstanding births including informal reminders • Regular staff forums and communication mechanisms established for all registration officers and use of SWRTG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff should familiarise themselves with the e-diary and related performance monitoring requirements • Nil returns for in-office waiting times where applicable should be regularly returned for performance monitoring purposes • A timely administrative check of SR's certificates ahead of ceremony dates should be introduced • Procedures should be established during RON Certification and QCC processing to avoid duality of function of registration officer roles • Registration officers should consistently use Form 52 whilst engaging with the coroner in accordance with GRO handbook and circular instructions • Registration officers should ensure that appropriate notifications to statutory bodies are completed following registrations in line with GRO handbook instructions • Mechanisms to establish clear audit trails in relation to correspondence processing should be introduced at all service points

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

4

4.1 It is a requirement of new governance that local authorities provide the Registrar General with details of its annual performance against five key indicators contained within the national GPG. Sections 1 and 5 of the table below show the district's attainment against national performance standards for the period April 2009-March 2010. Sections 2-4 show attainment from April-August 2010.

Table 2

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS			
Key Indicators	Monitoring mechanisms in place	Standard attained	Performance rating
1. Events registered within statutory timeframe i) 98% of Births registered within 42 days ii) 98% of Still-births registered within 42 days iii) 95% of Deaths registered with 5 days.	Yes Data extracted from RON (GRO)	97% 100% 84%	Not Met Nil (treated as Met) Not Met
2. i) average waiting times for registration and notice taking - Birth registration / declaration (3 days) - Still-birth registration / declaration (2 days) - Death registration / declaration (2 days) (all of above to standard of 95%) - Marriage / Civil Partnership Notice (5 days or to allow <u>all</u> ceremonies to proceed) ii) 90% of customers seen within 10 minutes of appointment time.	Yes (Corporate diaries examined daily) (Corporate diaries examined daily)	100% 100% 100% 100% (5 days)	Met (appointments available as required) Not Met
3. Certificate applications 95% of applications dealt with within 5 working days of receipt.	Yes (via monthly spreadsheet collation and analysis)	97%	Met (priority service introduced October 10 most other certificates issued within 5 days)
4. 90% of customers satisfied (evidenced from response to customer satisfaction surveys and actual number of returned forms).	Yes (via continuous customer surveys)	94%-based on average of results from customer surveys	Met
5. Total number of formal complaints received (less than 0.5% as a % of all registrations).	Yes (Corporate complaints system)	Less than 0.1%	Met

KPI 1 Events Registered Within Statutory Timeframe

4.2 An analysis of registrations for 2009/10 indicates that Powys only narrowly missed the national standard with regard to the timely registration of births. The standard achieved for deaths registered within the statutory period was 84% against the GPG target of 95%. Examination of RON data establishes that when coroner Part Bs are removed from the calculation the attainment figure rises to 97%. Examination of RON registration rates for the period April-August 2010 broadly reflects performance in the previous year.

4.3 The coroner and his administrative support are located in Aberdare. Part A and B forms are faxed daily to the register office and checked on receipt by general office staff. Informants are then contacted to confirm receipt of death certification and whether appointments have been made at the

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

4 *continued*

service point of the customer's choice. Part A and B forms are then scanned and e-mailed to individual outstations via generic e-mail addresses.

4.4 Despite these arrangements, coroner documentation is sometimes received too late to effect a registration within five days and some customers delay registering in order to attend a service point of their choice. The local authority may wish to consider engaging with the coroner to discuss whether there is any scope to improve the timeliness of coroner's documents.

KPI 2 Average Waiting Times

4.5 At the register office, the general office co-ordinates all appointments through a corporate e-diary/ email system. Although the majority of customers book appointments, walk-in customers are accommodated if possible at local offices, or offered an appointment at a future date. In addition to the central co-ordination of appointments, registration officers at all service points are also able to allocate appointments for customers.

4.6 Examination of the diary over a three month period indicates that customers are able to obtain all appointments well within national standards. Individual calendars are also monitored by the registration service manager to ensure that appointment availability is maintained. In this respect, the related GPG standards are consistently exceeded.

4.7 For in-office waiting times, data are collated monthly for performance analysis and a report is produced quarterly. Our concerns regarding the robustness of performance data in this regard have previously been outlined at paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4. We note also that a procurement exercise is currently underway to consider a corporate council-wide replacement for the current diary system which may provide additional features for performance reporting purposes in the future.

KPI 3 Certificate Applications

4.8 Powys centralised its certificate production at the register office in 2009. Applications can be made through any service point by post/ fax, in person or by telephone and are logged by the certificate production team into an electronic record. There is no on-line certificate service nor a facility for customers to download certificate application forms from the council's website. Comprehensive performance statistics in respect of certificate applications are collated and analysed each month. Analysis of performance data for the period April-August 2010 indicates that the GPG standard was exceeded, at 97%.

4.9 Customers have the option of being issued with a certificate within 5 days of application at the statutory fee. There is also access to a same day priority service for an additional charge of £25, a next day service at £20 or by recorded delivery return at £15. All certificate applications incur a £1 administrative fee to cover postage. These additional charges were introduced in October 2010; the vires upon which they are levied is unclear and we recommend that the local authority seek legal advice as to its powers in this respect.

KPI 4 Satisfied Customers

4.10 A customer satisfaction survey is ongoing with questionnaires provided to customers at the end of each appointment that assesses customer satisfaction against various elements of service provision. Results of the on-going surveys are also used to inform service planning. Analysis of survey information for April-August 2010 indicated that 94% of customers who responded (50)

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

4 *continued*

were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘fairly satisfied’ with the service. The service also receives a significant number of unsolicited ‘thank you’ cards and letters from satisfied customers.

4.11 Survey results are not made available to the general public. We would recommend that survey results be publicised at the register office, other main service points and on the registration pages of the website.

KPI 5 Compliments and Complaints

4.12 A corporate complaints, comments and compliments procedure is in place and advertised at the register office and service points via a booklet and on the local authority website. One formal complaint was received by the registration service during 2009-10.

Strengths and Innovations	Areas for Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appointment availability exceeds national standards• Certificate application processing exceeds national standards• Customer satisfaction rates exceed national standards• Only one formal complaint during 2009-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service managers should consider engaging with the coroner to explore any scope for improving the timeliness of issue of coroner’s documents• Legal advice should be sought on the vires of the additional fees for priority applications for certificates• Survey results should be publicised at the register office, other main service points and on the registration pages of the website

CUSTOMER JOURNEY

5

General

5.1 This chapter provides information regarding the customer journey within Powys. Table 3 summarises service performance against the associated non-statutory Customer Service Standards contained within the GPG. A full analysis is provided at Appendices D & E.

Table 3

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE SUMMARY TABLE					
Category	Number of Standards	Fully Attained	Mostly Attained	Partly Attained	Not Attained
Customer Service	8	5	2	0	1

Customer Care

5.2 During the DPU fieldwork activity, the public were promptly dealt with at the busy reception desk in the general waiting area of the Gwalia council offices and directed as appropriate to the register office where there is a small private waiting area. In Brecon and Ystradgunlais customers were also quickly attended to upon arrival by registration staff.

Initial Contact

5.3 The advertised telephone number for the register office is that of the general office which provides appointments as required and deals with most initial registration enquiries. The registration service website is also used by some customers to make enquiries by email via the website link to the registration generic mail box. Customers wishing to contact the registration service outside office opening hours do so via the local authority twenty-four hour emergency out of hours contact details. Registration officers are then contacted by way of private/ mobile telephone numbers.

5.4 We note that, at the initial contact stage, customers are not routinely offered bi-lingual appointments. We recommend that this be included at initial questioning/ point of appointment booking. Although it is accepted that the volume of requests in this respect is likely to be small where a bi-lingual registration/ notice is requested, appropriate arrangements can then be put in place in advance for the customer.

Accommodation, Access and Facilities

5.5 As part of this review, we undertook an inspection of the register office against plans held by GRO and can confirm that the current accommodation is consistent with those plans. The register office is located in council offices in Llandrindod Wells on the ground floor with public transport close by. Customer facilities include ramped access for wheelchair bound customers and parents with prams, a customer waiting area and public/ disabled toilets. A portable hearing loop is also available for use in the registrar's office and ceremony room. A public park in the vicinity of the register office provides a convenient area for photographic opportunities.

5.6 Accommodation at Brecon and Ystradgunlais were also visited as part of this review. In Brecon, the service operates from council offices on the outskirts of the town with access to public transport. There is disabled access, a general waiting area in the main reception and public toilets. There are no fixed or portable hearing devices to assist the hard of hearing in the registrar's office or ceremony room.

CUSTOMER JOURNEY

5 *continued*

5.7 Since 2009, the registration office in Ystradgunlais town centre has been co-located in modern accommodation with the library service. Public transport links and pay and display parking are close by. Customer facilities include disabled access, a separate waiting area for registration customers, public toilets and baby changing amenities. A portable hearing device is available for use in the registrar's office and the ceremony room. Outside there are limited opportunities for photographs although there is a courtyard style area which could be developed for such purposes.

Opening Hours/ Service Points

5.8 Registration services are available at the times and locations detailed in Appendix A. We are content that customer access to the service is very good in what is the largest geographical county in Wales. We also note that since the multiple registration districts were unified, customer access to the service has been improved through extended opening times at most locations.

Appointments

5.9 The register office and outstations operate an appointment system for all services. Customers arriving without an appointment are accommodated as quickly as possible or offered an appointment at their convenience. Thirty minutes are allocated for each appointment and an hour for standard statutory ceremonies. A 'Tell us Once' service is to be introduced in the new year; it is likely that death registration appointments will be extended at that point to 45 minutes on a trial basis.

Non-Statutory Services

5.10 In addition to statutory services, a limited range of non-statutory services including baby-naming and re-affirmation of vows is offered.

Customer Information and Literature

5.11 At the register office, staff were courteous and professional with appropriate advice and information provided to customers as necessary. A range of literature is displayed in the registrar's office and waiting area. There is also information available to customers on the content and structure of ceremonies and we are informed that a detailed ceremony brochure is under development. In Brecon and Ystradgunlais customers had access to a variety of registration and local authority literature.

Registration Service Website

5.12 The pages dedicated to the registration service on the local authority website hold general information about most registration services and is accessed via 'Community and Living-Life Events' from the home page. There are useful links to other web sites including Directgov and district Approved Premises. Although opening times of all service points are detailed there is no comprehensive list of service fees, information on still-births, citizenship or access to certificate application forms on-line although, we understand, the latter is one of a number of enhancements under consideration.

Mystery Shopping Exercise

5.13 As part of this review, we undertook a mystery shopping exercise during which a number of registration scenarios were assessed.

CUSTOMER JOURNEY

5 *continued*

Calls were answered promptly and responses to all enquiries were accurate and dealt with in a helpful and professional manner. One area where improvement could be made would have been to explore the option of registering a death by declaration at a more convenient register office for the customer.

Strengths and Innovations	Areas for Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good standard of customer care• Improved service point access / availability and levels of accommodation post unification to county registration district• Good range of informative literature available at the register office and other service points• Good service responses in respect of mystery shopping exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bi-lingual appointments should be routinely offered to customers at the time of initial contact with the service• Information published on registration pages of the council’s website could be more comprehensive• Consideration should be given to the availability of a portable hearing loop at the Brecon registration office

APPENDIX

A DISTRICT PROFILE

Demographic

Governance	County (Unitary Authority since 1996)
Formation	1996
Population	131.1 (2006 population estimates)
Size	5196 sq km
Region	Wales
Main Hospitals	Cottage hospitals in Brecon, Builth Wells, Knighton, Llanidloes, Llandrindod Wells, Machynlleth, Newtown, Welshpool and Ystradgunlais

Access and Facilities

Opening Hours Register Office (Llandrindod Wells)	Mon 11.00-13.00, Tues 09.00-12.00, Weds 14.00-16.00, Thurs 14.00-16.00 and Fri 11.00-13.00
Other Service Points	<p>Brecon: Mon 13.00-16.00, Tues 10.00-13.00, Weds 13.00-16.00, Thurs 09.00-12.00, Fri 10.00-13.00</p> <p>Builth Wells: Tues 14.00-16.00, Thurs 11.00-13.00</p> <p>Crickhowell: Thurs 14.00-15.00 (by appointment)</p> <p>Hay: Tues 14.00-16.00, Thurs 11.00-16.30, Fri 10.00-13.00</p> <p>Knighton: Mon 14.00-16.00, Weds 10.00-12.00, Fri 10.00-12.00</p> <p>Llanfyllin: Mon 10.00-12.30, Thurs 11.00-12.30</p> <p>Llanidloes: Mon 12.00-13.30, Weds 11.00-12.30, Fri 14.00-15.00</p> <p>Machynlleth: Tues 11.00-13.00, Thurs 14.00-16.00</p> <p>Newtown: Mon 10.00-13.00, Tues 14.00-16.00, Weds 14.00-16.00, Thurs 09.00-12.00, Fri 10.00-13.00</p> <p>Talgarth: Thurs 14.00-15.00 (by appointment)</p> <p>Welshpool: Mon 13.00-16.00, Tues 09.00-12.00, Wed 10.00-13.00, Thurs 13.00-16.00, Fri 10.00-13.00</p> <p>Ystradgunlais: Mon 09.30-12.30, Weds 09.30-12.30, Fri 10.00-12.30</p>
Emergency Access	LA twenty-four hour emergency out of hours contact number
Car Parking (RO)	No
Garden (RO)	No
Ceremony Rooms	Statutory RO room. Seven decommissioned rooms at former district register offices
Approved Premises	52
Designated RO	Yes - Llandrindod Wells

Business Volumes 2009/10

Births	282	Marriage Ceremonies	510
Deaths	811	Civil Partnership Notices	14
Birth Declarations	743	Civil Partnerships Ceremonies	9
Death Declarations	19	SR Certificates issued	1695
Still-births	0	New Citizens	35
Marriage Notices	649	Citizenship Ceremonies (group and private)	33

Statutory Post-Holders

SR	1	RBDs	11
ASRs/ AR's	0	Casual Deputies	7
DSRs/ DRBD's	33	Admin Support	1

APPENDIX

B GPG ASSESSMENT OF NON-STATUTORY STANDARDS

1. Customer service	
Key Activity & National Standards	Level of attainment and comments
Customer Satisfaction (KPI 4) 90% customer satisfaction level. Surveys undertaken to cover satisfaction with service access and availability; areas of service delivery dissatisfaction identified and acted upon; results published	Mostly Attained Survey information April-August 2010 indicated that 94% of customers rated the service as 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied'. Results not publicly available
Compliments and Complaints (KPI 5) Formal complaints received to be less than 0.5% of registration activities; clear, visual Compliments and Complaints policy in place; results published annually	Fully Attained Less than 0.1% formal complaints received during 2009/10 business year
Consultation Public views used to inform Service Delivery Plan; public/staff consultation strategy in place and reviewed	Fully Attained On-going consultation strategy via questionnaires in place feedback reviewed to inform service planning
On arrival - waiting times (KPI 2b) <i>Those offices with appointment systems</i> 90% of customers seen within 10 minutes of appointment time. Seen on arrival, on time or earlier	Not Attained 85% customers seen within 10 minutes of appointment times (based on survey results April-August 2010)
Waiting Times for Appointments for; Birth registration/declaration (3 days) Still-births registration/declaration (2 days) Death registration/declaration (2 days) Marriage and civil partnership notice (to allow ceremony to proceed) Customers without an appointment	Fully Attained Appointments available exceed GPG standards. Customers who attend without an appointment are seen as quickly as possible or offered an appointment at their convenience
Information about Services provided Available for statutory and non-statutory functions; in corporate format and obtainable at appropriate outlets; reviewed on a regular basis	Fully Attained Full range of informative material available to customers
e-facilities Up to date and informative web site; credit/debit card payment facilities; e-appointment booking system in place	Mostly Attained Information displayed on website accurate although no provision of facilities for on-line certificate application forms. E-appointment booking system in place.
Engagement with customers and key partners External partners identified and engaged with; account taken of feedback/comments; Elected members involved	Fully Attained Customer surveys on-going feedback informs service planning

APPENDIX

C CUSTOMER JOURNEY

As part of the review process an assessment was made on the “customer journey”.

1. How easy is it for the customer to make contact with the registration service?		
Contact number accessed:	via website	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	other council offices	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	stakeholder establishments	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	local directories	<input type="checkbox"/>
First point of contact	Direct to register office (registration office)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(by telephone)	Direct to register office (reception point)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Direct to Contact Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emergency contact number in operation		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<u>Comment:</u> A mystery shopping exercise established that telephone calls were answered promptly and information provided was accurate and consistent. Emergency contact numbers are published. Stakeholders have service contact details.		

2. How easy is it for the customer to access the registration service?		
Convenient central location of register office		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Additional service points within registration district		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Good public transport links in place		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Opening hours in line with other corporate services		<input type="checkbox"/>
Extended opening hours in operation		<input type="checkbox"/>
Lunchtime opening in operation		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<u>Comment:</u> Registration services in Brecon, Ystradgunlais, Llandrindod Wells and Llanidloes, Machynlleth offer partial lunch-time opening, there is currently no provision of early morning and late appointments.		

3. How easy is it for the customer to locate and access the register office?		
Good signage in place (street sign to RO <u>and</u> signs indicating location of RO)		<input type="checkbox"/>
On-site car parking/cycle area/disabled bays		<input type="checkbox"/>
Drop-off points (for bridal cars)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Direct access (office at street level with no steps or other barriers)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
At point of entry to building, access arrangements for disabled customers in place		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Reception point in place to greet/direct customers		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<u>Comment:</u> Limited disabled access and parking available at register office. Prompt introductions at point of arrival at general reception.		

4. How easy is it for customers to conduct their business quickly?		
Waiting time for an appointment meets national standards (all events)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Waiting time from arrival to registration meets national standards		<input type="checkbox"/>
Walk-in provision available		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<u>Comment:</u> GPG standards applied to appointment availability (in-office times at 85%). Walk-in customers are seen as soon as possible or offered an appointment when convenient.		

APPENDIX

C *continued*

5. Is there good information about the registration service available to the customer?	
Wide selection of statutory notices, booklets and leaflets within public areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wide selection of local information within public areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Use of IT to convey information (e.g. plasma screen) within public areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Easy access to registration services on website	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
All information on website is up to date <u>and</u> relevant	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promotional material in place (e.g. marriage brochure)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Compliments and complaints policy in place <u>and</u> visible to customers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Service standards/targets publicised	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Comment:</u> A range of registration and associated literature/ information available within the public waiting area on aspects of service provision.	

6. What facilities and enhancements are available for customers at the register office?	
Garden area	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good backdrop for photo opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Statutory ceremony room (meeting national standard)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Decommissioned rooms	<input type="checkbox"/>
Waiting areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Separate waiting areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quiet room available for distressed informants	<input type="checkbox"/>
Baby changing facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public toilets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Public telephone	<input type="checkbox"/>
Children's play area	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water dispenser/Drinks dispenser	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mobility provisions for disabled customers (e.g. ramps, wide doors, lower counter)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Visual provisions for disabled customers (e.g. Braille, large signs)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aural provisions for disabled customers (e.g. hearing loop, microphone)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Disabled washroom facilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rooms: clean and tidy/room for business to be conducted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wide range of choice with regard enhancements at ceremonies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Payment by credit/debit card	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Special arrangements for still-birth/neo natal death arrangements	<input type="checkbox"/>
Home registrations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Partnership working with associated groups (e.g. bereavement)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wedding publication	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Comment:</u>	

APPENDIX

C *continued*

7. Is there a good range of other services available to the public?	
Private citizenship ceremonies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Baby naming ceremonies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Re-affirmation of vows	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Civil Funerals	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nationality Checking Service	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Comment:</u>	

8. How did staff engage with the public?	
Confidentiality respected at all times	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Understanding needs of customer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Clear and concise explanation of procedures etc	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Good explanation of certificates and forms	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Showed sympathy/empathy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Receptive to questions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Professional outlook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<u>Comment:</u>	

ACTION PLAN FOLLOWING GRO REVIEW ON THE REGISTRATION SERVICE IN POWYS

Recommendation	Action	Date actioned
All staff should familiarise themselves with the e-diary and related performance monitoring requirements	All registrars to be notified by email of this requirement	22/11/10
Nil returns for in-office waiting times where applicable should be regularly returned for performance monitoring purposes	Exception reports already introduced as a result of registration review	22/11/10
Earlier check of ceremony documentation to allow for fresh notices to be given if anything is found to be amiss	All registrars to be notified by email of this requirement	22/11/10
Procedures to avoid “duality of function” by ROs during RON certification and quarterly copy processing to be introduced	All team leaders to be notified at Team Leader meeting and by email	22/11/10
Registration Officers should consistently use Form 52 whilst engaging with the Coroner in accordance with GRO Handbook and circular instructions	All registrars to be notified by email of this requirement	22/11/10
Registration Officers should ensure that appropriate notifications to statutory bodies are completed following registrations in line with GRO Handbook instructions – in particular Form 111 (Notification of Deaths to Govt Departments or Other Bodies) and Form 161 (Widow/Widowers/Surviving Civil Partners) for marriages if Widows/Widowers/Surviving Civil Partners	All registrars to be notified by email of this requirement	22/11/10
LA to seek legal advice on the powers	Advice being sought from Legal Section, Powys County	Legal advice sought

available to it to charge a non statutory priority fee for urgent certificates	Council	and cleared by Legal Manager 31/12/10
Mechanisms to establish clear audit trails in relation to correspondence processing should be introduced at all service points	All registrars to be notified by email of this requirement	22/11/10
Annual survey results should be published at the Register Office, other main service points and on the registration pages of the web site	To be actioned by Registration Service Manager	To be published at end of financial year 2010/11
Bi-lingual appointments should be routinely offered to customers at the time of initial contact	Web site has been updated to reflect that marriages can be carried out bi-lingually. Other pages will also need to carry this information	Completed
Information published on the registration pages of the council's website could be more comprehensive	Web site has been updated	Completed
Availability of a portable hearing loop at the Brecon Registration Office for both registrations and ceremonies		To be purchased/installed by end of financial year 2010/11
Online application form for duplicate certificates	Currently being updated	By 31 March 2011