

18 February 2009

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## **CUSTOMER CHARTER DIP SAMPLING AUDIT**

### **Introduction**

- 1 The aim of this paper is to report to BMT the findings of the dip sampling audit on the Customer Charter standards and to ask BMT to consider and agree the recommendations.

### **Background**

- 2 In 2008 Wiltshire FRS launched its Customer Charter which sets out the standards of service that the public can expect to receive. At the same time, service order 2.5 on Customer Service Standards was written for staff to outline how they are expected to meet those standards. It is important that the organisation measures its performance against the standards in the Charter and makes this information available to the public. This was raised at the Charter Mark assessment in May 2008 and there is currently a partial non-compliance in this area.
- 3 Several of the standards are monitored electronically and some are covered by Local Performance Indicators. However, performance against the standards relating to answering telephones, correspondence and emails is not monitored automatically. Therefore, a dip sampling audit was undertaken during December 2008 by the Project Delivery Team in Corporate Planning. Key departments, which had been identified as "touch points" for the organisation, were contacted by phone, letter and e mail and the responses monitored.

### **What did the audit cover?**

#### **Answering telephones**

- 4 The following departments were contacted by phone at various times during the day during the week commencing 15 December 2008 and the responses monitored:

Personnel, TDC, Reception, Community Safety and Technical Fire Safety in Swindon, Salisbury and Trowbridge.

This was to check compliance against the following standards:

- Telephones are covered between 9 – 5 (4.30 on Fridays)
- Telephones are answered within 5 rings
- Voice mail greeting is up to date
- Messages are returned within 2 working days of returning to the office

#### **Responding to emails**

- 5 An e mail was sent on 5 January 2009 to 5 addresses, as advertised on our website: General Enquiries, Recruitment and Technical Fire Safety offices in Swindon, Salisbury and Trowbridge.

This was to check compliance against the following standards:

- Acknowledgement sent within 5 working days
- Full response sent within 15 working days
- Use of out of office if person was away from the office for more than 1 day with date of return and alternate contact given.

## **Responding to correspondence**

- 6 A letter requesting information was sent by first class post on 15 December 2008, to the following addresses, as advertised on our website: Personnel, Community Safety Central, Training and Development Centre and Technical Fire Safety offices in Swindon, Salisbury and Trowbridge.

This was to check compliance against the following standards:

- Acknowledgement sent within 5 working days
- Full response sent within 15 working days

## **Findings**

- 7 A full table of results can be found in Appendix A.
- 8 A total of 35 telephone calls were made over the course of one week, 22 of which were answered. All calls that were answered were done so within 5 rings. Where a call was not answered a message was left and nearly all of these ( 92 % or 12 out of 13) were returned within 2 days. Most of the voice mail greetings were up to date and personalised (6 of the 7 sections called) with only 1 section's greeting not personalised. It was noted that not all phones have been set up to activate the voice mail greeting within five rings.
- 9 A total of 5 emails were sent and all were acknowledged on the same day. Full responses were received by 4 recipients and these were well within the 15 working day time limit. To date one email has still not been responded to in full.
- 10 Full responses have been received to 4 of the 6 letters sent out. All of these were received within 15 working days. However, as 2 of these responses took longer than 5 working days, an acknowledgement letter should have been sent. There are still 2 outstanding replies.
- 11 This audit was also used an opportunity to gauge awareness of the Customer Charter amongst staff and to determine how easy it is to find telephone numbers from the public's point of view.

The majority of those we spoke to on the telephone (6 out of 7 sections) were aware of the Customer Charter. Only one person was not.

Telephone numbers and addresses used in this audit were mostly accessed from the Wiltshire FRS website. In most cases this was straight forward. However, it was noticed that the telephone number for the Training and Development Centre was out of date but this has since been rectified.

## **Policy Implications**

- 12 There are no direct policy implications.

## **Risks**

- 13 If the organisation does not perform well against its Customer Service Standards, the public and partners may lose confidence in the Service.  
If Wiltshire FRS does not measure its performance against the standards in the Charter and make this information available to the public, it will not perform well at the Charter Mark/Customer Service Excellence assessment in 2009.

## **Human Resources Implications**

- 14 Staff, particularly those in public-facing roles, need to be aware of the organisation's customer service standards.

## **Financial and Legal Implications**

- 15 There are no direct financial and legal implications.

## Conclusion

- 16 Wiltshire FRS has performed well against the customer service standards. In particular, it has performed very well against the standards for answering telephone calls. All calls were answered on time and where someone was unavailable, voice mail was in place and messages were responded to promptly. The majority of key public facing staff are aware of the Charter and the standards within it. However, not all staff are aware of the Customer Charter and this needs to be addressed.
- 17 Most of the e mails and letters were responded to within the required timeframe but the fact that responses are still outstanding for 1 email and 2 letters demonstrates that further work is required in this area.

## Recommendations

- 18 BMT is asked to consider this report and agree the following recommendations for the Project Delivery team to progress.
- Ensure that the Customer Charter and the associated service order are included in the induction for new starters.
  - Publish article in QM advising staff how we are performing against the standards in the Customer Charter.
  - Ensure that all voice mail greetings are activated within five rings.
  - Publish instructions on how to use voice mail in QM.

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### List of Appendices:

Appendix A – Customer Charter quality audit results table

**Unpublished documents used in the preparation of this report : none**

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