

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

BEST VALUE

REVIEW OF THE

REGISTRAR OF BIRTHS, DEATHS AND

MARRIAGES

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1. The Current Position

Review of the service:

The Brent Registrars' Office provides a highly personal, friendly, responsive and accessible service. Every birth or death in the Borough is registered, and notices of marriage are taken for every borough resident who wishes to be married. This service is delivered by 12.5 full time equivalent staff.

In the past five years the Registrars' Office has made significant strides in building on and improving its services to customers, and these are outlined in the text. User-satisfaction is measured regularly by surveys and has been and remains consistently high. Any complaints are always dealt with promptly and effectively and used to improve the service.

The Registrars' Service works closely with those who are also connected with births and deaths (hospitals and Coroner's Officers), to give a supportive service to those requiring it.

Although there are no national figures for service delivery or standards, this office has set its own standards measured against those required for Charter Mark. All relevant environmental and sustainability goals have been addressed and the service has kept within budget and maintained financial targets. It has coped with a climate of reducing expenditure and at the same time managed to generate small increases in income.

Description of the Service.

The functions of the Register Office are:

- To register all births, deaths and still-births occurring within the Borough.
- To take notices of marriage for all residents living in the Borough. To conduct and register civil marriages.
- To perform all civil marriages taking place in the Borough.
- To retain and make available certified copies of historic records.
- To give assistance to those wishing to research family records.
- To provide an outreach service to those who for reasons of illness or disability may require special help:

The registration process for births and deaths is free of charge. The issue of certificates to allow a funeral to take place, a document to clear outstanding pensions or benefits with the DSS, and a short version birth certificate are also free of charge. The fees for all other services are paid to the Local Authority. The total income in 2001/2 was £311,000, (60% of total expenditure).

Service performance

Registrars' have no statutory Best Value indicators. However, performance of the Registrars' local indicators has been compared over the past three years. (See Appendix 1)

For processing requests for births and deaths within the target time of 20 minutes performance was 88% in 1999/00, 90% in 2000/2001 and 89% in 2002/02.

Processing of requests for notices of intended marriages performance was 93% in 99/00, 88% in 00/01 and 89% in 2001/02. There has been a significant increase in the number of notices as a result of the Immigration and Asylum Act that requires both persons to attend the office. Performance is slightly down as a result of the increased workload with the same staff resources.

Processing of requests for certificates within target time has been at a high level 95% in 99/00 and 00/01 but has declined in 01/02 to 93%.

The percentage of postal applications returned within 24 hours was 88% in 99/00, 87% in 00/01 and is down at 81% in 2001/02 as credit card telephone applications take up more staff time and consequently reduce staff time spent on postal applications.

Objective of the Service

The objective of the service is to ensure that registrations of births, deaths and marriages are recorded correctly in accordance with the law, and the following enhancements have been implemented to improve the service:

- Extended opening hours that are the longest in England and Wales.
- Saturday appointments for registering births can be made.
- The marriage ceremony is specifically tailored to meet the individual requirements of each couple.
- Naming ceremonies
- More use of electronic recording of information including email and on-line certificate application.
- A Register Office web site and the introduction of a Webcam for weddings.
- High priority on staff development and training, especially in the areas around equality and access.
- Retaining the Charter Mark on three occasions
- The Registrar's Service achieved Investors in People accreditation in June 2002.
- The service has ISO 14001 accreditation as from August 2001.
- Polite, helpful and efficient staff
- Telephone answered within five rings.
- Outside office hours there is a voice mail message and all calls will be returned on the next working day.
- Postal applications are dealt with on the day of receipt.
- Replacement certificates are issued within 20 minutes on a personal application at reception.
- Any complaints are acknowledged in one working day and a response made in three working days.
- A Language Line is available if English is not a first language.
- Provision of access and toilet facilities for people with disabilities, induction loops in Registrars offices and the Marriage Room.
- Measures to reduce marriages of convenience since Jan 2001 due to the implementation of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Service Location and Operating Hours.

The Register Office
Town Hall
Forty Lane, Wembley, Middlesex

Hours of Opening:
Mon - Fri 8.30am - 5.00pm
Sat. - 9.00am – 3.00pm
Sun - Two hours for emergencies

Costs of the Service:

The unit cost of the service in 2001/2002 was as follows:-

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Budget | - | £514,000 |
| Income | - | £311,000 |
| Resident Population | - | 254,942 (ONS 2000 mid-year estimates) |
| Cost per head of population | - | £0.79p (Budget less income, divided by resident population) |
| No. of F/T equivalent posts | - | 12.5 |
| Income as a %of expenditure | - | 60.50% |

How the Registrar Service relates to the Corporate aims and objectives:

The three corporate strategies which relate to the Registrars' Service are:

- Achieving Best Value services
- Involving our community
- creating to a modern, well-managed authority

Registrars' Service Operational Plan:

The Service Operation Plan 2002/3, which is attached as Appendix 2, sets out the scope and reasons for the service, and demonstrates how it delivers the Council's three corporate strategies which relate to it. The performance data included within it demonstrates that the service has high standards of customer care and delivers an excellent service.

Changes to the service:

The major issue challenging the Registrars' Service at present is the Government Review. The main impacts of these changes are set out under the 'Challenge' section of this review.

From January 2001 a notice has been required from each party to the marriage whether they live in the same district or not. This legislation involves additional work with no extra government funding. However, the additional work has generated additional income and the overall effect is cost neutral.

Since the amendment to the Marriage Act 1994, it has been possible to have a civil marriage in premises licensed for the purpose. It is no longer necessary for a couple to marry in the district in which they reside. Choice of venues, type of marriage and content of ceremony have ensured that quality and service have increased as a result of competition.

Brent Register Office has responded to the trend allowing:

- wider freedom to couples who wish to be married,
- the choices in the ceremony they would like.
- opening hours have been extended,
- a Sunday service for marriages in Approved Premises.
- Telephones answered during Council opening hours and a voice mail message outside those hours with calls returned the next working day.

Performance awards

The Register Office has been awarded the Charter Mark on three occasions and in May 2002 were assessed for, and achieved Investors in People. The service underwent an ISO 14001 audit in June 2001 and have now been awarded accreditation. All details are on the Council Web Site.

The registration service has also tested itself against the best in the private sector. In 1999 the service obtained an unprecedented three awards in the Daily Telegraph/Energis Customer Service Awards. Two of the three awards were in competition with the private sector and included being overall winner in the 'Best Small Organisation' category.

Customer Care

Users receive a high level of customer care. Quality standards briefly set out what they can expect, and can be found in the reception area. Information leaflets are also found in other Council reception points and the One Stop Shops. There is a Sunday service for those who require a document for burial within 24 hours. There is a 24 hour service for anyone who is terminally ill and wishes to be married at very short notice and cannot be moved. Staff will register a birth or death outside the office, if someone who must register is too sick or infirm to leave their residence or hospital. There is also a 24 hour out of hours information service for urgent enquiries. The office mobile phone number is given on the voice mail message and an officer with knowledge of the service is available to answer calls.

Both current and potential users include disabled people who have difficulty accessing services or with visual or hearing impediment, ethnic minority groups with particular cultural or religious beliefs, those who have no English but still require the service.

The Unit provides a service that is accessible to all. The actual building is fully equipped with ramps for wheelchair users, a disabled toilet, loop systems in one registrar's office and the marriage room.

A service on Sunday morning is available for those who may need a document for burial within 24 hours due to religious or cultural beliefs. The building has been equipped with external lighting back and front to ensure users are safe and can see and be seen clearly after dark.

Environmental Sustainability.

Registrars' Unit has ISO 14001 accreditation, and since Aug 2001 has been undertaking six monthly environmental audits to ensure that the service continues to improve its environmental performance. The process involves continuous environmental improvements in:

- Paper re-cycling
- Using re-cycled paper where possible for leaflets and information
- Using wood from sustainable forests when purchasing furniture
- Finding best price for purchases.
- Ensuring all equipment is serviced and in good order to protect resources.

Legislation and the Service:

Disability Discrimination Act (1995),
Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)
Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1992),
Race Relations Act (1976),
Sex Discrimination Act (1975),
Human Rights Act (1998)

The needs of disabled people are considered as high priority and the Register Office has ensured that facilities are available to deal with those needs. For example: ramps, loop systems in the marriage room and one registrar's office, a disabled toilet, one Registrar's office large enough and well situated to accommodate a wheelchair. The staff have all undergone training on the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and are fully aware of their responsibilities. Leaflets are available on tape, in large print and in other languages on request. Staff are fully aware of their part in matters of health and safety. Risk assessments are produced annually and actions monitored.

2. The Four "C"s

Compete

The Registration Service is a statutory service with all its duties and responsibilities strictly defined in the law. It has very little discretion to deliver services outside its area of responsibility and under existing law it is not possible for local authorities to outsource the service.

All births and deaths must be registered within the registration district in which they occur. Although it is possible for informants of these events to attend any Register Office in England and Wales they could only give the information for the registration by declaration and this information would then be passed on to the appropriate Register Office by post. This system is commonly used for birth registration, particularly when areas have a centralised maternity provision. However, because of the delay caused by the postal system, it is rarely used for death registration as the documentation required for the funeral can only be issued by the officer who actually registers the death.

The position regarding the giving of legal notification of intention to marry is very similar. All couples who intend to be married, anywhere other than a Church of England Church, have to give notice of marriage in the district in which they both live. They have no choice about the office that they both must attend and once again the register office is a monopoly provider.

Historic certified copies of births, deaths and marriage records dating back to 1837 can also be obtained from local register offices on payment of a statutory fee. At least with this aspect of service there is an element of choice in that copies of the original records are held at the General Register Office (GRO) and copies can be obtained from them. However, obtaining copies from the GRO can be more expensive and slower than obtaining a copy locally and this facility is often only used in circumstances where people are unsure about their place of birth.

The main area where customers can exercise some freedom of choice is in the location of their wedding. Since the introduction of the Marriage Act 1994 couples have been able to choose any register office in England and Wales for their wedding. The Act also introduced the concept of Approved Premises for civil weddings. These are generally locations like hotels, banqueting suites and stately homes that can be licensed by local authorities for civil marriage ceremonies. Couples can also choose to be married in any one of these Approved Premises throughout England and Wales irrespective of their district of residence. The introduction of this facility has introduced an element of competition between register offices for this marriage business.

Brent has been quite successful in retaining its market share of weddings despite this introduction of choice.

The table below shows the number of civil weddings taking place in the register office before and after the legislative changes took place.

| Year | Year | Year |
|------|------|------|
| 1994 | 1995 | 1996 |
| 1318 | 1391 | 1433 |

This indicates that the service provided in the Brent Register Office actually succeeded in attracting additional weddings following the change in the law.

However, in recent years there has been a significant increase in civil weddings taking place in Approved Premises and because Brent does not have many suitable venues the total number of weddings has dropped back slightly. Even so the total number of weddings has remained remarkably constant as displayed in the table below.

| | |
|------|------|
| Year | Year |
| 2001 | 2002 |
| 1321 | 1252 |

As has been implied in the Challenge Section of this review the legislative changes set out in the government's white paper 'Civil Registration: Vital Change – Birth, Marriage and Death Registration in the 21st Century' will introduce complete freedom of choice for customers. The geographical boundaries that exist currently will be removed for people registering births and deaths and giving notice of intended marriage. They will be able to access the service through any service provider (initially local authorities) and those that provide the best levels of access will attract the most users.

It has also been implied in the white paper that although service providers will initially be local authorities the future delivery of registration services could be opened up to competition. This will be particularly relevant in failing authorities that fail to deliver on minimum national standards.

Once the new legislation is in place Brent Council will be in a position to market test the service.

Challenge

3.1 challenge the purpose

A service that has to be provided by statute is difficult to operationally challenge. There are no alternative service providers and fee income is set nationally. However, in terms of the service improvements outlined below the quality of service we believe, is at a high level.

The Registrar's Service in Brent has an excellent track record, over the past ten years, of challenging the way in which a very traditional service bound by legal restrictions has been delivered. The Registrar Office has been nationally recognised as an innovator and leader of change and a number of service 'firsts' have been introduced in Brent. The key milestones over the past ten years are:

- 1992** First Register Office to introduce Saturday afternoon weddings;
First Register Office to enable couples to enhance their civil wedding with readings/poetry/music;
First Register Office to introduce a comprehensive set of customer service standards;
- 1993** First Register Office to win the Charter Mark award;
- 1994** Introduction of 24 hour out of hours service;
- 1996** Charter Mark awarded for the 2nd time;
- 1997** Daily Telegraph/BT Customer Service Award – Highly Commended;
- 1998** First Register Office to introduce credit card sales for all services;
- 1999** Daily Telegraph/Energis Customer Service Awards – Winner in 3 categories: Best Small Organisation Public Sector; Best Telephone Service; Overall Winner Small Organisation; Charter Mark awarded for 3rd time.
- 2000** First Register Office in the UK to introduce weddings on the web;
- 2001** First Register Office to introduce applications for certified copies online

This track record of customer service excellence and innovative improvement initiatives demonstrates a total commitment to continuous service improvement over a long period of time.

The implementation of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 on 1st January 2001 challenged the service in terms of its ability to cope with a large increase in workload without a significant decline in service performance. In one respect the service had anticipated the changes by

increasing opening hours in 1999 in order to make access easier for customers. We also ensured maximum flexibility in the workforce by ensuring that all registrars were fully trained to take notice of intended marriage. The fact that performance has reduced only marginally since the Act was introduced is a tribute to the hard work and commitment of staff.

However, the biggest challenge to face the registration service is the proposed change in legislation outlined in a recent government white paper.

In January 2002 the government published a White Paper entitled 'Civil Registration: Vital Change – Birth, Marriage and Death Registration in the 21st Century'. This white paper sets out the most radical agenda of reform to the civil registration service in England and Wales since the inception of the service in 1837. The main proposals for change are as follows:

- Births and deaths will be able to be registered in person at any service provider outlet. Service providers will initially be local authorities but the geographical restrictions that currently exist will be removed and all registrations will be held on a central database managed by the Registrar General.
- Births and ultimately deaths will be able to be registered by telephone or over the internet to a central call centre which will be the responsibility of the Registrar General.
- Once the central database of registration records up to 70 years old has been established, paper certificates will no longer be issued. Central and local government organisations and other approved bodies will have electronic access to the central database.
- All historic records over 100 years old will not be held by the local service providers. They will be transferred to the local archivist and public access to the records will be unrestricted.
- Weddings will no longer have to take place in premises designated for the purpose. There will be a move to a system of licensed celebrants who will be responsible for determining the suitability of the venue suggested for the marriage.
- All registration officers will become employees of the local authority rather than statutory officers of the Crown serving at the pleasure of the Registrar General.
- Local Authorities will be expected to provide additional services such as naming ceremonies and re-affirmation of marriage vows.

The timetable for the implementation of these changes is quite rapid and legislative amendments will be implemented under the provisions of the Regulatory Reform Act. The first stage to update the legislation should be completed in 2004. Detailed implementation will be phased and many should be in place by 2005.

The way in which local authorities react to the proposals contained within the white paper will indicate their willingness to embrace fundamental change and seek continuous improvement to the way in which the registration service is delivered locally.

The staff of Brent Register Office decided to approach the reforms in a typically positive and constructive manner. We decided to run an externally facilitated event in a local hotel, involving all staff for a full day, to discuss fully how the challenges presented by the proposed changes in legislation will be addressed. (See Appendix 11 for notes of the Away Day Challenge).

Following presentations on the progress the service has made over the past ten years and an assessment by the Service Director on his view of the anticipated impact of the legislative changes staff split into three groups to brainstorm the different aspects of the proposals. The ideas coming out of these sessions are listed below.

Births and Deaths Group

- ❑ Production of commemorative birth certificates including birth weights and possibly photographs of the child.
- ❑ Re-location of Registrars' at the two hospitals in the Borough
- ❑ Certificates for parents of still born children possibly including photographs when requested
- ❑ Extending hours and days of access to the service with consideration of 7 day operation
- ❑ Look into setting up a Bereavement Centre in which Registrars', coroners officers, hospital patients officers and bereavement counselling services could be co-located.
- ❑ Collaboration with Nursing Homes and Hospices in the Borough to provide an outreach registration service on request

Marriages group

- ❑ Time limitations should be relaxed and celebrants to cross borough boundaries
- ❑ Celebrants to receive quality presentation skills training and minimum standards for ceremonies to be adopted
- ❑ Proactively seek to increase the number of civil wedding venues in the Borough prior to the change in legislation in order to improve customer choice
- ❑ Seek partnership deals with hotels and restaurants to offer wedding packages
- ❑ Re-furbish Town Hall Marriage Room and Gardens in order to consolidate position as a venue of choice for NW London
- ❑ Improved marketing of Brent Council as a supplier of wedding services

Historic certificates group

- ❑ Produce comprehensive information leaflets explaining abolition of paper certificates
- ❑ Introduce commemorative historic certificates on good quality parchment paper before abolition of official certificates
- ❑ Customers to choose type of paper and images for certificate from catalogue
- ❑ Ensure that historic records are handed over securely and efficiently to Brent Archive Unit
- ❑ Commemorative certificates to be made available in different languages

It is now essential that the ideas generated from the brainstorming sessions are transformed into tangible actions and it has been decided to adopt a project management approach to the implementation stage of the process. The ideas quite neatly form 5 projects that are as follows:

1. Establishing 7 day Service
2. Introducing Commemorative Certificates
3. Bereavement Centre
4. Marketing, Communication and Consultation
5. Accommodation

It has been proposed that all senior members of staff will take on one project each and will act in the capacity of project leader. This should ensure staff ownership of the changes being suggested and delivery of the projects. Support, advice and assistance on the principles of project management will be provided and externally facilitated presentation days will ensure that progress is monitored against the milestones contained within each project plan.

This innovative approach accords with the Brent Register Office ethos of challenging the status quo in order to improve delivery of service to the customer.

Environmental improvements

This service places a high priority on Local Agenda 21, sustainability and ISO 14001. The goals that can be achieved include providing a caring and safe environment. There is a garden, and commitment to reducing the impact on the environment is demonstrated by achieving ISO 14001 accreditation.

Compare

There are very few, if any published comparisons within the Registration Service, and no official Government statistics. Therefore, there are no readily available sources of comparable data on which to compare Brent's performance.

To overcome this, the Registrar's Service has produced baseline, and wherever possible, comparative data in the following areas.

1. Cost, including hourly cost comparisons
2. Service delivery, including IT developments and customer care improvements
3. External accreditations
4. Social and legislative changes and the impact on the service.

1. Cost

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Budget 2002/03 | £524,000 |
| Estimated Income | £311,000 |
| Resident Population | 254,942 |
| Cost per head of population | £3.27 |
| No. of F/T equivalent posts | 12.5 |
| Income as a %of expenditure | 59.35% |

Hourly cost comparison

Brent has tried to do an hourly cost comparison with the seven members of its family boroughs plus the London Borough of Sutton (Sutton achieved a 3 star rating in its Best Value Review.)

The members of Brent's family boroughs are: Barnet, Harrow, Ealing, Hounslow, Newham and Waltham Forest. The objective was to compare the hours worked on a particular week by the Superintendent Registrar and the additional Registrar and multiply the hours worked on that week by 52, and divide by the total staff costs.

Not all the boroughs approached responded to the benchmarking request but the results of boroughs who did respond are attached at Appendix 3.

Although Brent's cost per hour is the highest of the family group, the total number of hours for Brent is higher than the other boroughs. Brent staff worked a total of 17,472 compared to Harrow who worked 5,824. The workload of the superintendent registrar post in Brent is significantly higher, (163) per week, than superintendent registrar posts in the other boroughs, and this could have an impact on costs. This is because the workload assessment formula does not take into account managerial functions which are, in Brent, wholly undertaken by the Service Director/Superintendent Registrar. This is not the case in other local authorities where these duties are often undertaken by a senior manager in another department and the costs not wholly attributed to the registration service. The high workload figures in Brent also means that a greater number of customers come through the door and make telephone enquiries to the service. Many of these service requests do not result in a transaction that would count towards the workload assessment figure. However, it is still necessary to have staff in place to answer the queries.

The service exercises tight financial control and some cost effective measures have been identified such as the development of the web site which contains extensive Frequently Asked Questions. This innovation has reduced the number of telephone and e mail enquiries to the office and enables customers to access service information 24 hours a day. The requirements

of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 for both parties to give notice of marriage since Jan 2001 has also had a significant impact on the workload of the service. However, the service is being delivered within the same staff resource as before implementation of the Act.

2. Service delivery

Over the past five years the Register Office has shown continuous improvement in its service delivery, expenditure control, income generation, sustainability, staff management, equality of access and customer satisfaction. This is evidenced by the achievement and retention of Charter Mark status, the technology improvements, (web and webcam developments), and Investors in People and ISO 14001 accreditation.

The Registration Service – Good Practice Guide is a self assessment summary guide, published by The Local Government Association of the Registrar Service as at 24 June 2002. Its intended use is to publish good practice for registration services. The Guide sets out the minimum, good practice and better practice service standards for registration.

Brent's self assessment was undertaken on 24 June and the main points arising from the self assessment were:

- Overall, the council performs excellently in meeting its aims by providing a registration service that meets most of the needs of its users.
- The service scored 91% overall. This was higher than any other authority. (See the comparative graph in appendix 4b).
- It scored 95% for minimum standard, 90% for good practice, and 86% for better practice.
- In terms of minimum standards it scored 100% on personnel and staff development, accessibility and marriage services.
- In terms of good practice it was rated as 100% on performance management and staff development.
- Better practice scored 100% on personnel and staff development and accessibility, and service standards.

The Good Practice Guide demonstrates that Brent meets thirty eight out of forty minimum standards. The results are outlined in full in Appendix 4a, including a graph which compares Brent with other local authorities that have completed the exercise. (See Appendix 4b).

Appendix 5 compares Brent's Registrar's websites with its family group and shows that on all indicators Brent's service is customer friendly and convenient. For example, Brent's is the only service with caters for on-line applications and payments for historic certificates.

3. External accreditation

Brent is unique in the number and range of awards it has achieved within its unit. Brent Registrars' Office has three times been awarded a Charter Mark for excellent service. The office was praised in the assessors report for our user friendly service, performance against our service standards, our consultation with professional users and minority groups, and promotion of choice to all users. The regular audits conducted by The General Register Office suggest that the service provided is of high quality and compares well with other high achieving registration districts i.e Charter Mark winners.

Brent Registrar's Service is the only one in the UK with ISO 14001 accreditation.

Commitment to Investors in People has also ensured continued improvement in best practice in organising and delivering the service. Through meeting the required criteria staff have had the opportunity to discuss the kind of training and self development they needed to ensure knowledge and interest but also responsibility and ownership of their service. The office was

one of the first Register Offices to have an extensive web site giving a full range of services, together with quality standards. Other offices have been visited to ascertain how our non-statutory practices e.g. reception area, telephone answering, certificate issue, detail of customer care compare.

There is no evidence that other Register Offices address equality issues more effectively. The special services offered at Brent match other London Boroughs because of statutory requirements and the particular needs of the community. Some Register Offices may operate longer on Sunday because the population may require it but none offer telephone access to service information 24 hours a day seven days per week. We will continue to monitor all services provided to ensure the highest level of care is given. The users here are provided with a welcoming and friendly environment, guaranteed privacy for all registrations, notices of marriage or for any delicate matter that need be discussed. Front line staff wear name badges and are identified by photographs in the main reception area. A different board in the Marriage Waiting Area identifies the staff on duty for marriages.

4. Social characteristics

The most striking feature of the Borough is the contrasts that exist in its economic, environmental, ethnic and social make-up. The population is one of the most culturally and racially diverse of all the local authorities in England and Wales. The Black and Asian communities are now estimated to account for over 50% of the population and almost one in ten residents is Irish born. There is a high proportion of refugees and asylum seekers in Brent, many of them having English as a second language and there are over 100 languages spoken in the Borough.

Consult

Consulting with our customers and staff is a priority for the service. Consultation is conducted in RBDM on several different levels.

First, customers for registration have access to a comment card which asks them to report on the quality of the service which they have received. An example card is included as Appendix 6. Very few of the cards are returned but they do provide an insight into how our customers perceive the service.

Staff surveys, training days and appraisals form part of the overall development of the service, and are linked to the IIP which monitors and develops the staff through a systematic training programme.

The Staff survey:

The purpose of the survey was to understand the views of the staff and use it as a problem solving tool with the IIP Plan and other quality initiatives. The feedback demonstrated that the staff have a clear role in achieving the objectives of the Unit and identify with the units standards and values, but:

- Efforts are not properly recognised and rewarded.
- Differences between staff in terms and conditions are unfair.
- There is an unfair balance between personal needs and expectations.

In terms of priority issues and actions:

- Managers do not tackle problems with a reasoned and balanced approach.
- Managers are not prepared to listen to suggestions and to act on them.
- The unit does not value its staff or try to develop them.

Training Days/Focus Groups:

To address the requirements of the IIP programme and the problems identified by the Staff survey the Unit has introduced training days and a staff forum (April 2002) with a focus group to explore specific action.

Partnership working:

The Registrars' Unit has a good record in partnership working with the following Groups:

- Brent and Harrow Coroners Offices
- Northwick Park hospital
- Central Middlesex Hospital

See Appendix 7 for the Minutes of the Partnership working Group.

Appraisals:

Staff have six monthly appraisals as part of their training and development programme.

Customer survey results:

Customer surveys for the Registrars' unit were carried out in Oct 2000 and Oct 2001. Results from both surveys were very positive. In 2000 98% of customers surveyed were either fairly satisfied or very satisfied. Results in 2001 showed a slight drop with 94% of customers being fairly or very satisfied with the services. However, this compares favourably with the average overall satisfaction across Environmental Services which was 70%. (See Appendix 8).

Equalities:

The survey data for 2001 was also analysed from an equalities viewpoint. Graphs showing how Registrars' compared with the Environmental Services' average are shown at Appendix 9.

The overall findings for equalities showed that generally Registrars' scored above the ES average for overall satisfaction. In terms of Ethnicity 100% of all ethnic groups who responded were either fairly or very satisfied with the Registrar service. The ethnic groups were broken down as follows: white (including white other), Black or Black British (including Black Other), Asian or Asian British (including Chinese and Asian Other), Mixed (e.g. white and Black African and including mixed other).

In terms of gender the overall satisfaction rate with the service was 100% for both males and females. In terms of disability, the overall satisfaction rate was 100% for both the disabled and the able bodied.

APPENDICES

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- Appendix 2 - Registrars' Service Operational Plan for 2002/3.
- Appendix 3 - Hourly Cost Comparison with other London Boroughs - Benchmarking exercise.
- Appendix 4a - Registration Service - L.G.A. Good Practice Guide (Self-assessment summary).
- Appendix 4b - Good Practice Guide (Self-assessment summary) - Graph showing how Brent compares with other boroughs.
- Appendix 5 - Comparison of Websites - Registrars' and other boroughs.
- Appendix 6 - Example of Brent Registrars' Comments Card.
- Appendix 7 - Minutes of Partnership Working Group Meeting.
- Appendix 8a - Environmental Services Customer Survey 2000 - Summary Table
- Appendix 8b - Environmental Services Customer Survey 2001 - Summary Graph.- Overall Satisfaction.
- Appendix 8c - Customer Survey 2001 - Analysis of how Registrars' results compared to other units in Environmental Services.
- Appendix 9 - Customer Survey 2001 - Equalities data - graph showing how Registrars' compared to the average results for Environmental Services on Overall Satisfaction with the Service and Fairness of Treatment.
- Appendix 10 - Analysis of Registrars' Results from Customer Survey 2001 - equalities breakdown.
- a) Ethnicity
 - b) Gender
 - c) Disability
- Appendix 11 - Notes of Registrars' Challenge Away Day on 10th April, 2002.