

Cumbria Registration Service Modernisation

Invitation to Stakeholders to Comment

The Registration Service in Cumbria is about to enter a period of unprecedented change from October onwards as it modernises its structures and services. The aim is to create a more accessible and customer focused Service that not only meets the needs of the public but that also operates effectively and efficiently within national standards of performance.

Some of the key features of the changes we are introducing are;

- A single registration district for Cumbria replacing the existing nine districts
- On line services including appointment booking
- A centralised system for certificate issue available 24/7
- New services including identity checking

Although the objective is to modernise the way in which the Registration Service operates, the plan is to build on the excellent reputation and quality of service that the Service has developed over many years. We won't be throwing out the baby with the bath water. Progress will be closely monitored and customers' and stakeholders' feedback will be reviewed regularly to ensure that the modernisation process achieves its strategic aims.

As a stakeholder in the Registration Service in Cumbria this is your opportunity to comment on our plans to modernise our Service. The accompanying briefing note sets out in more detail our aims, objectives and proposals. If you would like to comment, please send us your ideas and views on line to andrew.smith@cumbria.gov.uk, or Andrew Smith C/O Cumbria Registration Service, The Castle, Carlisle CA3 8UR to reach us no later than 31 August 2011.

Jim Grisenthwaite

Assistant Director, Local Services, Cumbria County Council

29 July 2011

Briefing note regarding proposed changes to the Cumbria Registration Service

Civil Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths was established in England and Wales in 1837. Although regulated by the General Register Office, this statutory system has been delivered through a network of local Registration Districts and local Registrars and Superintendent Registrars for the past two centuries. In many respects this system has remained largely unaltered until the last few years when the General Register Office for England and Wales embarked upon a national agenda and programme to overhaul and modernise civil registration.

For some time this national agenda for change within civil registration has been evident and here in Cumbria the first tangible sign came in 2008 when Registration Service staff ceased to be civil servants and became local government officers, but thus far Cumbria has not adopted or followed what many other local authorities and registration services throughout the country have already done by seeking to modernise the way the Service itself operates.

Following the publication of the consultation paper *Registration Modernisation* in late 2005, it was announced that the Government intended to continue to push ahead with new governance arrangements for Registration Services designed to hand over greater control to local authorities. The modernisation agenda has set out to create a framework of National Standards to establish clear accountability for service delivery. At the same time it has set out to enable services to be designed around the needs of local people in order to offer greater flexibility and customer choice. This flexibility and choice is to be achieved in part by revised and more modern ways of working.

Other key elements of the modernisation agenda include:

- the greater use of technology & ICT
- greater flexibility in the storage of historic registers and improved preservation
- a less prescriptive framework to allow registration processes to be more flexible with services matched to local needs
- moving the accountability for service delivery from individual statutory officers to local authorities

Whilst some changes within the wider modernisation agenda require amendments to primary legislation, significant progress can be made within the existing statutory framework and there are now fewer barriers to hinder or thwart change within local registration services.

Overall the adoption of the modernisation agenda enables the local authority to exercise greater powers and control in order to determine the structure of the Service within Cumbria, and to establish practices and procedures suitable to meet customer demand at a local level. This will not only provide flexibility for the Service but will also enable it to adapt more quickly to differing service demands and changing priorities.

Our proposals for change will be introduced on a phased basis from October 2011 onwards and are fully focused on improving access for the customer. The replacement of the existing nine registration districts by **a single registration district for Cumbria** is at the heart of this.

Example

The law requires that a member of the public wishing to register a birth or a death has to do so in the registration district in which the event took place. At the moment, if a death takes place in Barrow but the next of kin live in Carlisle, a journey from Carlisle to Barrow is necessary for the death to be registered within 5 days. Following the introduction of the single registration district for Cumbria, it will be possible for the next of kin in this situation to register the death in their local register office.

The introduction of an on line appointment booking system will also create choice for members of the public and allow the Service to exercise greater control over the management of demand.

By centralising the issuing of birth, marriage and death certificates at our new, state-of-the-art Archive Centre in Carlisle, we believe we will not only be able to ensure the long term preservation of the unique collection of civil registration records but that we will also be able to create a more efficient and effective service for the public 24/7 through the provision of on line ordering in addition to the more traditional routes of telephone, postal and face to face ordering.

The Registration Service has successfully introduced a number of new services for the public in recent years including citizenship and civil partnership ceremonies. As new responsibilities are passed to local registration services by central Government, we will ensure that we develop new services, such as identity checking, with customer needs as our priority.

We have concentrated our attention in this short briefing note on the customer facing aspects of our modernisation proposals. In addition the staffing and management structures of the Registration Service are also subject to change. Here the aim is to simplify the structures in order to create a more flexible workforce that can deliver the customer facing improvements.

If you would like more details of the range of our proposals, please use the contact details in the accompanying letter.

Jim Grisenthwaite

July 2011