



Assessment Report

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE





1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the assessment, Humberside Fire and Rescue Service were found to have a deep understanding of, and commitment to, Customer Service Excellence. The commitment was displayed from Senior Management levels through to operations and front line staff.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those people involved in the overall assessment process. It has been a pleasure meeting with your team and having the opportunity to observe your service in action.

The outcome of the assessment was -

“Continued award of the Customer Service Excellence Standard has been recommended”

Address:	Summergroves Way, Hull, HU4 7BB		
Standard(s):	Customer Service Excellence	Accreditation Body(s)	UKAS
Representative:	Leissa Neilsen		
Site(s) assessed:		Date of audit:	9 th February 2017
Lead Assessor :	Matthew Watson	Additional team member(s):	n/a
Type of Assessment:	Annual Review		
Review of Certification Claims	Claims are accurate and in accordance with SGS guidance		

2. CONTEXT

Humberside Fire & Rescue Service (HFRS) provides services to four local authority areas covering the Humberside region: Hull; East Riding of Yorkshire; North Lincolnshire; and North East Lincolnshire. The service employs 1001.63 f.t.e staff and provides emergency fire and rescue services on demand, with demanding target times for attendance at incidents.

HFRS is operating in a challenging climate, both financially, and with significant changes in the demands and needs of its wide variety of customers. Whilst still required to respond quickly and efficiently to fire and other major incidents, with challenging targets for response time and quality of service, HFRS has seen a noticeable shift in demand patterns in recent years, with fewer fire emergency and major incident calls, yet increase in other types of work, most noticeably response to flood emergencies and increasing demand for public safety work. The service has met these challenges head on whilst still retaining its ability to respond to emergencies.

The assessor was pleased to note a continuing focus on the many and varied needs of HFRS's customers –everyone living, working and visiting in the area. Particular recent developments include playing a key role in the delivery of Hull's 2017 Capital of Culture programme, which is forecast to bring 10 million extra people to the region in the current year (1million have already visited). Apart from the general responsibility for the health and safety of participants, HFRS has been at the forefront of planning many large-scale events in the region, often with challenging requirements in terms of public safety.

As demand for emergency response in key areas such as fire and major incidents has decreased, HFRS has continue to develop innovative and proactive service models to safeguard and improve the health and safety of its customers. Much interest has been shown by other fire and rescue services in these developmental models and much good practice has been shared. Examples include a dedicated 'Falls Team' who work around the clock responding to falls, helping to lessen the burden on local ambulance services, and allowing many people to remain in their own home, rather than placing demands on hospital A and E departments. Following initial basic training, a great deal of expertise has been developed, and members of the team have built great rapport both with their customers, but also with the local NHS practitioners to the extent that they now are well-trusted and valued for their contribution to public health improvement

Another exciting development proposal in the planning stage is an Integrated Care Centre, which will allow even greater partnership working with other health



and safety practitioners, but which for the first time will on the same site as a fire station.

The assessor was pleased to note great leadership and commitment to the service. This was evident from the Chief Fire Officer through to front-line and back office staff. One specific example of this was the freedom given to the Falls Team to manage their own workload without close supervision from their manager. Team members were able to focus more effectively on the needs of their customers, managing their own time, allowing them to programme in repeat visits to customers to check their progress and using time between call-outs to target education and information work, together with liaison with partners. A recent customer of the service, Mr Stanley Fieldhouse said that his confidence had increased greatly as a result of the team's work and that he was now able to move around his house without fear again.

Partnership work is very strong in HFRS. Partners were unanimous in their positive comments regarding the commitment of HFRS staff. For example, Jane Mears of Hull City Council, Health through Warmth service said that whilst she worked with many partners, staff at HFRS were always well-organised, had great commitment and rapport with their customers, helping to make joint projects work very well.

The assessor was pleased to note high levels of customer satisfaction, great listening to customers and many service improvements. Mr Wayne Gulliatt had recently made a complaint about damage to his vehicle by HFRS staff. In line with improvements in complaints handling, the matter was speedily resolved, by a personal visit from a senior officer, a speedy investigation, confirmed by correspondence, and a payment made (in person) in respect of damages. Mr Gulliatt said that he was very impressed with the professionalism of HFRS in resolving the matter.

Customer journeys are well developed throughout the service and the assessor was pleased to note recent improvements, for example in complaints handling and in the delivery of services by the Falls Team, where extra steps had been added at the completion of the journeys to ensure customer satisfaction.

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3. METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

The assessment was undertaken in two stages; the first was a review of your self-assessment submission. This review enabled the assessor to gain an understanding of how the organisation has met the requirements of the Customer Service Excellence standard.



The next stage was to review the actual service delivered on-site. This was conducted through reviewing practice as well as speaking to staff, partners and customers. This included following customer journeys through your processes and how these aligned with customer insight.

During the assessment process the criteria are scored on a four-band scale:

COMPLIANCE PLUS - Behaviours or practices which exceed the requirements of the standard and are viewed as exceptional or as exemplar to others, either within the applicant's organisation or the wider customer service arena.

COMPLIANT - Your organisation has a variety of good quality evidence which demonstrates that you comply fully with this element. The evidence which reflects compliance is consistent throughout and is embedded in the culture of the organisation.

PARTIAL COMPLIANCE - Your organisation has some evidence but there are significant gaps. The gaps could include:

- Parts of the applicant's organisation which are currently not compliant and/or
- Areas where the quality of the evidence is poor or incomplete and/or
- Areas which have begun to be addressed and are subject to significant further development and/or
- Areas where compliance has only been evident for a very short period of time

NON COMPLIANT - Your organisation has little or no evidence of compliance or what evidence you do have refers solely to a small (minor) part of your organisation.

The current scheme allows applicants a maximum number of partial compliances, equating to a pass mark of 80% for all criteria.

4. OPENING MEETING

The on-site assessment commenced with an opening meeting.

The assessment activity and the partial compliances were discussed. The itinerary had been agreed with Humberside Fire & Rescue Service in advance. The organisation was informed that all information obtained during the assessment would be treated as strictly confidential.



The scope of Assessment was confirmed as: Humberside Fire & Rescue Service

5. ON-SITE ASSESSMENT

The Assessor was accompanied throughout the assessment by Chris Harrison and Leissa Nielsen and other personnel within the organisation were involved when assessing activities within their responsibility.

The assessment resulted in the raising of no partial compliances. A number of observations are listed in Section 7 of this report.

Criterion	Maximum number of Partial compliance	Actual number of non-compliance	Actual number of partial compliance	Actual number of Areas for Improvement
1	2	0	0	1
2	2	0	0	
3	2	0	0	1
4	3	0	0	
5	2	0	0	

Number of good practices awarded during the assessment	5
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6. AREAS OF PARTIAL COMPLIANCE

CRITERION 1

Nil

CRITERION 2

Nil

CRITERION 3

Nil

CRITERION 4



Nil

CRITERION 5

Nil

7. OBSERVATIONS

During the site assessment the following general observations were made. These include: positive areas scored as Compliance Plus; areas of good practice; areas for improvement identified throughout the entire assessment process, as listed below.

Areas for Improvement

- You have established a customer satisfaction rating of 86% for 2016/17, following detailed analysis of significant levels of customer feedback, and have an aspirational improvement target, yet you have not made your customers aware formally of this. You could consider publishing this achievement on your website, together with a specific improvement target for 2017/8
- Your website is well structured and informative (although rather formal) and you make good use of social media to keep your customers aware of your key messages and service improvements. You could consider further improving this by developing a simple 'customer promise' bringing together your key messages to your customers in terms of your standards and targets in key areas such as service quality and timeliness of response.

Areas of Good Practice

- 1.1.3 The assessor was particularly impressed with the efforts made by staff to service the needs of hard to reach and vulnerable customers, often above and beyond the core requirements of the service. The care shown by members of the Falls Team, and the referral and follow-through of a customer in fuel poverty (noted by staff following a fire incident) being two notable examples.

- 1.3.5 Well-developed customer journeys have been further improved. Complaints are treated promptly with in-person contact in addition to the written steps in the policy, and follow-through of customer journeys has often added value to the service.
- 2.1.1 The commitment of the Head of Service and senior managers was apparent to the assessor. Staff have been invited to participate in new developments (for example the Falls Team) to improve the service offered to customers.
- 2.1.6 Senior managers empower employees to participate in the customer-focused culture of HFRS. Staff are given support, but often have freedom of action in order to ensure that the full needs of customers are satisfied (beyond the immediate requirements of the service).
- 4.3.4 All customer feedback on the service is logged and analysed to identify trends. The comments are then fed back to service teams by the Community Safety Inclusion Manager, for discussion to ensure that managers and frontline staff are aware of customers views, and amend service practices to take this into account.

8. ACTION PLANNING & NEXT STEPS

The achievement of Customer Service Excellence is an ongoing activity and it is important that Humberside Fire & Rescue Service continues to meet the elements of the criteria throughout the three years the hallmark is awarded for. Efforts must be made by Customer Service Excellence holders to continually improve their service.

We recommend that you develop an action plan based on the findings of this report. The action plan does not need to be a separate document and is likely to be more effective if the actions are embedded in your normal improvement and service developments plans.

We will undertake an annual review that will look at your continued compliance with the Customer Service Excellence. As part of the review we will also look at progress on any findings of the previous assessments.

In addition to reviewing progress outlined above, we will also review the services delivery, done so by following customer journeys.



For more information on the annual review please refer to our document “Building on your Customer Service Excellence success – Preparing for the annual review”.

Holders must inform SGS of any major changes in the service provision covered by the scope of the certificate. This includes reorganisation or mergers.

In addition, SGS must be informed should the certified service experience a significant increase in customer complaints or critical press coverage.

If you are in doubt at any stage, we strongly recommend contacting the Customer Service Team for advice on the significance of any service or organisational change, or issues surrounding customer complaints.

SGS will visit within the next 12 months for the annual review.

SGS recommends that Humberside Fire & Rescue Service retains a copy of this report to aid continuous improvement, and as a reference document for future assessment reviews.