

**CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE**



**DEVON REGISTRATION SERVICE**

**Registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages  
and Civil Partnerships  
Celebratory Ceremonies  
Nationality Checking Service  
and Citizenship Ceremonies**

**BUSINESS AND SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN**

**April 2010 to March 2012**

## PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

To continue to offer a flexible but efficient service to the public, to register births, death marriages and civil partnership, to offer a Nationality Checking Service and group and individual Citizenship ceremonies, Senior Registration Officers have been trained in Death registration in order to maximise appointments and in case of a flu pandemic.

To continue to offer non-statutory ceremonies such as Baby naming, Renewal of Vows, Commitment ceremonies alongside statutory requirements, training all staff in all aspects of registration to enable more flexible working.

To seek more appropriate accommodation for Tiverton Registration office and North Devon and Northam Registration offices. We have recently relocated our offices in Teignbridge and West Devon to provide better access to the public. To continue to assess the provision of DDA-compliant facilities at all locations where possible and to ensure that any new accommodation is fully compliant.

Whilst outstation venues have been closed this has enabled the service to offer longer hours at existing district offices where facilities and accessibility for the public are more suitable.

To regularly review the Nationality Checking Service to ensure that it is offering the best customer service possible and that staff are fully trained and kept up to date with changing legislation.

To continue to provide group citizenship ceremonies at regular intervals at County Hall, Exeter and working in partnership with Exeter City Council using the Guildhall on occasions for these ceremonies. To make provision for the conduct of individual or family ceremonies at District Registration Offices as requested (for which a separate fee is chargeable), to revise on a regular basis ensuring that a high standard is achieved at all times. To involve district councils and other services in the ceremony. To involve the local community by asking choirs to sing at the ceremony.

To liaise on a regular basis with DCC ICT department to ensure that the service is fully equipped to deal with changing national programmes. To create an on line ordering service to allow members of the public to order and pay for copy certificates on line (this will be live in August 2011). To purchase additional bolt on packages from zipporah to allow the public to book their own appointments and to book ceremonies on line (to include a rota setting function).

Review Service provision on an ongoing basis to include staff, premises, opening hours and accessibility

Ensure that resources are available for the day to day operation of the Service

Maintain a high standard of service delivery in accordance with the policies of the County Council and the General Register Office, including the Registration Service national Good Practice Guide

Raise the profile of the Devon Registration Service within the local community

Monitor the Service budget and consider additional methods of generating income

Develop networks both locally and nationally so that new practices or strategies can be introduced into the local service, including facilities for birth and death registration at local hospitals

Encourage staff to utilise existing skills and provide opportunities to develop new ones

To prepare a training programme for all staff and ensure that timetables for learning and development are adhered to. To ensure that all staff carry out Health and Safety training to be provided by DCC. County Registrar to carry out an annual technical review on all Registration Officers and Deputy Registrars offering feedback to ensure that standards are kept to a maximum.

Regular staff meetings to be held at all offices to ensure that staff are kept informed of any changes and all staff have an opportunity to voice any concerns.  
Annual staff appraisals to take place for all staff, this is the responsibility of line managers and should result in a two way discussion regarding achievements and targets and should link in with staff learning and development plans.

Where appropriate the training co-ordinator should use existing staff to assist with training courses ensuring utilisation of existing experience and boosting staff morale.

To offer training outside of the service staff, for example clergy, GP's and school visits.

To become a 'Learning and Development Centre of Excellence' in registration for the South West, enabling neighbouring Registration Service staff to train within Devon. (A fee will be chargeable per delegate).

To liaise regularly with the Customer Service Centre to ensure that high standards of customer care are adhered to, to allow staff regular visits to the CSC to build and maintain a good working relationship.

To continue to work in partnership with central government on the Tell Us Once project led by the DWP – enabling public to advise all LA departments of births and deaths in one appointment.

To continue to work with the library to ensure that the public are aware of the benefits of the service, issuing a library card at all birth registrations.

To work with Devon Records Office to offer the public an additional search service for family history.

## SERVICE STRUCTURE

The County Solicitor is appointed to the role of Proper Officer. The Proper Officer for Registration Matters has overall local authority responsibility for the provision of the Service. The Devon Register Office and Ceremony Room is at Castle Street, Exeter.

Devon County Council is committed to providing excellent customer service and will strive as a minimum to meet the 'Good Practice' standards contained in the 'General Register Office/LACORS (Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services)' Good Practice Guide'

With a large and mainly rural county, however, it is the intention that the public continue to have easy and flexible access to the Registration Service.

Freepost feedback cards are distributed to the public after every appointment from all offices and returned to the Devon register office, where they are entered onto a database and annual reports produced. The Registration Service participates in the County Council's customer complaints procedure - [www.devon.gov.uk/compliments\\_and\\_complaints.htm](http://www.devon.gov.uk/compliments_and_complaints.htm)

There are currently eight Registration offices within the Devon County Council area, these are: East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon, North Devon, South Hams, Teignbridge, Torridge and West Devon. Most offices provide a Ceremony Room as well as office accommodation for officers who take notices of marriage, notices of intention to register a civil partnership and register births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships and some buildings are licensed as Additional Ceremony Rooms where ceremonies may be provided on a slightly-higher-than-the-statutory fee basis.

In addition to the Office ceremony facilities the Service also licence a number of other properties where civil ceremonies may take place. These are approved by the Authority under the Marriage Act 1994, and from 5 December 2005, Civil Partnership Act 2004 and provide greater choice for couples wishing to marry or register their partnership within the Devon County Council area.

When the law allows to offer flexible times for ceremonies to give better customer service and to boost Devon's economy.

Devon Register Office house all registers dating from 1837 until present day and are able to supply copy certificates to the public, including a priority service where the certificate is produced within 24 hours.

Advice on national issues is available from the LRSA (Local Registration Services Association) who act as a co-ordinating body for all registration services.

A Customer Charter is in place and service delivery targets have been set in accordance with the Good Practice Guide and will be published periodically in the future. In addition Devon County Council has corporate policies and standards (particularly customer service standards) in place to which the Registration Service staff will also adhere - [www.devon.gov.uk/customerservices.htm](http://www.devon.gov.uk/customerservices.htm)

Emergency and out of hours arrangements are in place through the County Council's My Devon Customer Service Centre/Emergency Control Room. Each has available telephone numbers (both land line and mobile) for the Register Office and for each Registration Office. In addition the emergency/out of hours contact telephone number is indicated on each external sign at Offices or is indicated elsewhere when the offices are closed.

Business Continuity Plans are in place for the Register Office and for each Registration Office. Work on an overall Plan for the Registration Service to include specific 'flu pandemic plans is currently in progress. There is already in place a Devon County Council 'Flu Pandemic Business Continuity Plan which is constantly under review and which includes partnership arrangements with stakeholders.

## See Appendix 1 (Registration Office Details)

### SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

Statutory fees are set by the Government and may not be adjusted by the Local Authority, discretionary charges can be made for non-statutory and enhanced services.

Under the Marriage Act 1994, and from 5 December 2005, the Civil Partnership Act 2004, local authorities will be permitted under well-being powers to set their own fees for issuing a licence to property owners for the holding of civil ceremonies and for the attendance of staff at these establishments. In addition, under local authority well-being powers the Registration Service is able to offer celebratory ceremonies and set its own fees accordingly. Staff have been trained in-house as Celebrants as required. Demand for these locations continues to increase in Devon and although more income has been generated the pressure to provide additional trained officers may result in higher staff costs.

Increased use of IT within the Service has and will continue to place greater demands on the budget. However it is crucial that the service is brought up to date and the use of IT is of great importance to ensure better service for the customer and a better use of staff time. RON is a national system introduced by the GRO and is now the primary system for the registration service. RSS will be phased out and from 2011 will not be supported by GRO helpdesk. Devon Registration Service will review the use of RSS and will need to consider replacing this system.

Public demand suggests that customers wish to use the internet to purchase services, therefore a system will need to be developed to enable the public to order and pay for copy certificates on line (this will be in place by August 2011) – this will result in a reduction of calls to the CSC which have to be handed off to the office. This will enable a reduction of 0.5 FTE based a Devon Register office and will ensure a more efficient service.

Zipporah e-bookings is the electronic system currently used to make appointments for births, deaths and notice of marriage. This is currently used by CSC or registration staff. Zipporah have developed software which allows the customer to book their own appointment, this is being used successfully in other LA's and will be considered by Devon Registration Service.

An electronic ceremonies package will also be considered, amalgamating several offices and using staff to cover venues surrounding these offices will ensure better use of staff and savings on mileage charges and staff wages.

A number of Registration Offices around the county are of poor quality and alternative accommodation will be sought where applicable especially bearing in mind compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act.

## STAFFING

The County Solicitor has been appointed as Proper Officer for Registration Matters. As Proper Officer he must ensure that the Service complies with the appropriate legislation, i.e. Marriage Act 1949, Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953, Civil Partnership Act 2004. A Registration Service Manager (RSM) to include statutory Superintendent Registrar duties and responsibilities has been appointed from 1 April 2007. The RSM is based at the Register Office. A peripatetic statutory County Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages (CRBD) has also been appointed from 1 April 2007.

Existing Superintendent Registrars and Registrars of Births, Deaths & Marriages became deputies to the County Superintendent Registrar and County Registrar on 1 April 2007 as appropriate. Superintendent Registrars are now titled Senior Registration Officers and have trained as Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Registrars are now titled Registration Officers.

Registration Officers are encouraged to participate in corporate training as available and as deemed necessary. In addition Registration Officers will be encouraged to participate in any relevant training offered by the General Register Office or other associated bodies.

Registration Officers will be subject to corporate disciplinary procedures and will have access to corporate grievance procedures as required.

Fully trained deputy staff are available to provide cover during periods of annual leave, sickness or any other absence agreed by the Proper Officer. Most deputy staff are appointed to work in more than one District to allow for greater flexibility in their employment.

Four District Offices have been allocated a number of support hours which are used to provide some Reception cover plus administrative assistance to the registration officers.

A Training Co-ordinator has been appointed.

## TRAINING

A senior registration officer within the Service acts as Training Co-ordinator in addition to her substantive post and provides or will provide technical training for Deputy Superintendent Registrars and Deputy Registrars of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships and Nationality Checking Service. The Training co-ordinator will attend the relevant training to enable them keep their training skills up to date.

Courses are currently provided on a number of topics including

- basic training for registration posts
- ceremony training
- computer software (RON software, e-mail facilities, word processing etc.)
- specific training as required by Devon County Council or the General Register Office
- Equality and Diversity Training provided by Devon County Council

The Training co-ordinator will also review and revise the Training Strategy to include corporate Devon County Council training requirements and opportunities.

Every effort will be made to offer a wider choice of training to all staff to ensure that their knowledge relates not only to registration work but also includes administrative and management functions. Courses will also be made available as new corporate policies are introduced by the Authority, e.g. equality issues.

Training of celebrants for the celebratory ceremonies will be continued in-house as required.

Training of staff involved in citizenship ceremonies and civil partnership registration and ceremonies has or will be provided as required.

If courses are not at capacity then they are offered out to neighbouring registration services who may have staff in need of training – there is a fee of £50 per day for each delegate.

Existing registration staff are given the opportunity to help with training courses, depending on their experience. This allows us to utilise existing experience and good practice and is good for staff morale. The training co-ordinator is in attendance and oversees all training.

## QUALITY

Devon Registration Service will continue to be delivered to the high standard which already exists and in accordance with the Marriage and Registration Acts, Regulations and the Good Practice Guide. The Proper Officer, through the Registration Service Manager and County Registrar, will be responsible for monitoring service provision and standards in conjunction with Her Majesty's Inspector of Registration. There is in place a Devon County Council performance monitoring and management system (SPAR.net) - [www.devon.gov.uk/best\\_value.htm](http://www.devon.gov.uk/best_value.htm). The specific performance indicators set by the Good Practice Guide have been added to this system and will be monitored and published quarterly on the Devon County Council website - [www.devon.gov.uk/people](http://www.devon.gov.uk/people). Systems are in place for the Registration Service Manager, County Registrar, the Register Office and each Registration Office to collect the necessary evidence to ensure that performance standards are being met.

## EQUALITY

Devon Register Office is a 'designated office' enabling staff to deal with matters relating to immigration.

Where possible adaptations have been made to the access of properties used for Registration to comply with the DDA regulations - **see appendix 2**

Parking facilities are provided at most registration offices for people with disabilities.

Marriage vows are available in Braille. Large print material is also available.

All staff have carried out DCC online Disability Awareness Training and at least one member of staff from each office has received BSL awareness training. A member of staff at the Devon Register office has undertaken BSL NVQ level 1.

Induction loops have been installed in all offices and portable loops are also available.

A Nationality Checking Service is available within Devon Registration Service allowing people to have their documents checked prior to applying for British Citizenship, saving both time and money. This service is provided in conjunction with the Home Office and advisors are required to complete training.

Once British Citizenship is granted the Registration Service offer the choice of either a group ceremony held at County Hall or an individual ceremony held in any of the Registration offices by registration staff.

**PROJECTS**

<b><i>Project</i></b>	<b><i>Action required/ Person(s) responsible or involved</i></b>	<b><i>Implementation Date</i></b>
<b>GENERAL ISSUES</b>		
<b>Clergy /GP Training</b>	Discuss the possibility of providing some form of training and/or advice to local members of the Clergy (Training co-ordinator)	Ongoing
<b>Workshops/Seminars</b>	Arrange for appropriate speakers to give presentations to staff on topics of common interest e.g. crime prevention, bereavement, coroners officer (Training co-ordinator)	Ongoing
<b>Staff Development</b>	Explore the possibility of staff development via shadowing or secondment opportunities (Training co-ordinator)	On going
<b>Corporate Staff Appraisal</b>	Ensure that all staff, including deputies, have received an appraisal interview and that training requirements have been noted for future (Line Managers)	Ongoing
<b>Leaflets</b>	Information/fees leaflets to be revised and updated as required (Registration Service Manager)	Ongoing
<b>Ceremonies brochure</b>	Update and amend annual editions as required (Registration Service Manager)	Annually
<b>Celebratory Ceremonies</b>	Promote celebratory – naming, renewal of marriage vows, commitment as appropriate (all staff)	Ongoing
<b>Good Practice</b>	Develop and disseminate good practices throughout the Service	Ongoing
<b>Income generation</b>	Explore new ideas for creating additional revenue (Registration Service Manager)	Ongoing

**IT issues** Develop on-line certificate ordering, add ceremony package to zipporah (Registration Service Manager, IT) Ongoing

**Obtaining Feedback** Participate in corporate and Registration-specific customer feedback projects Ongoing

## **OFFICES AND STAFF**

### **EAST DEVON DISTRICT**

**Staffing** Review work patterns of all staff, including deputy provision (Registration Service Manager and Senior Registration Officer) Ongoing

**EXETER Staffing** Ensure that staff absence is only covered by deputies if necessary (Registration Service Manager and Senior Registration Officer) Ongoing

**MID DEVON Office** Review accommodation at Tiverton Ongoing

**Staffing** Review work patterns of all staff, including deputy provision and provision of support hours for Senior Registration Officer (Registration Service Manager and Senior Registration Officer) Ongoing

**NORTH DEVON Staffing** Review work patterns of all staff, including deputy provision and monitor (Administrative Officer and Superintendent Registrar) Ongoing

**SOUTH HAMS Staffing** Review work patterns of all staff, including deputy provision (Registration Service Manager and Senior Registration Officer) Ongoing

**TEIGNBRIDGE  
Staffing**

Review work patterns of all staff, including deputy provision  
(Registration Service Manager and Senior Registration Officer)

Ongoing

**TORRIDGE  
Staffing**

Review work patterns of all staff, including deputy provision  
(Registration Service Manager and Senior Registration Officer)

2010

**WEST DEVON  
Staffing**

Review work patterns of all staff, including deputy provision  
(Registration Service Manager and Senior Registration Officer)

2010

## APPENDIX 1 - REGISTRATION OFFICE DETAILS

**Central public contact number** is the County Council's My Devon Customer Service Centre - the telephone number for the Registration Service is 0845 155 1002

**Registration Service Manager/County Superintendent Registrar:**

Devon Register Office, Castle Street, Exeter EX3 4PQ- telephone: 01392 385618, fax: 01392 384232, e-mail: [register@devon.gov.uk](mailto:register@devon.gov.uk)

All Offices operate an appointment system booked through our Customer Service centre on 0845 155 1002

**Devon Register Office:**

Castle Street, Exeter EX4 3PQ  
telephone: 0845 155 1002, fax: 01392 384232 , e-mail: [srexeter@devon.gov.uk](mailto:srexeter@devon.gov.uk)  
*Monday to Thursday, 9.00am - 4.30pm and Friday, 9.00am - 4.00pm*

**Registration Offices:**

East Devon East Devon Business Centre, Heathpark Way, Heathpark, Honiton EX14 1SF  
*Monday to Thursday, 9.30am-1.00pm and 2.00pm-4.30pm*  
*Friday, 9.30am-1.00pm and 2.00pm-4.00pm.*  
telephone: 0845 155 1002, fax: 01404 549457, e-mail:  
[sreast@devon.gov.uk](mailto:sreast@devon.gov.uk)

Outstations at Exmouth

Mid Devon The Great House, 1 St Peter Street, Tiverton EX16 6NE  
*Monday to Friday 9.30am -1.00pm*  
telephone: 0845 155 1002, fax: 01884 253946, e-mail:  
[srmid@devon.gov.uk](mailto:srmid@devon.gov.uk):

North Devon Civic Centre, North Walk, Barnstaple EX31 1ED  
*Monday to Thursday, 9.00am-4.30pm, Friday, 9.00am-4.00pm*  
telephone: 0845 155 1002, fax: 01392 388477, e-mail:  
[snorth@devon.gov.uk](mailto:snorth@devon.gov.uk)

South Hams Follaton House, Plymouth Road, Totnes TQ9 5NE  
*Senior Registration Officer - Monday, Wednesday and Thursday,*  
*9.00am-12.30pm and 1.30pm-4.00pm*  
*Registration Officer - Monday to Friday, 9.00am-12.30pm*  
telephone: 0845 155 1002, fax: 01803 864368, e-mail:  
[srshams@devon.gov.uk](mailto:srshams@devon.gov.uk)

- Teignbridge Old Forde House, Brunel Road, Newton Abbot  
*Monday to Thursday, 9.00am-4.30pm, Friday, 9.00am-4.00pm*  
*telephone: 0845 155 1002; fax: 01626 206346, e-mail:*  
*s rteign@devon.gov.uk*
- Torrige Council Offices, Windmill Lane, Northam, Bideford EX39 1BY  
*telephone: 0845 155 1002, fax: 01237 473385, e-mail:*  
[srtorr@devon.gov.uk](mailto:srtorr@devon.gov.uk)
- Monday, 9.30am-4.30pm*  
*Tuesday, 9.30am-2.30pm*  
*Wednesday, 10.30am-4.00pm*  
*Thursday, 9.00am-3.00pm*  
*Friday, 9.30am-12.30pm*
- West Devon Kilworthy Park, Tavistock,  
*Monday to Thursday, 10.00am-2.00pm*  
*Friday, 10.00am-1.00pm*  
*telephone: 0845 155 1002; fax: 01822 618935; e-mail:*  
*srwest@devon.gov.uk*
- Outstation at Okehampton by appointment only

## **Appendix 2 – DDA alterations to Registration Offices**

**Exeter Register Office** – accessible

**Mid Devon** – THIS IS A LISTED BUILDING. A portable ramp has been purchased to aid entry to the ceremony room, offices are accessible.

**East Devon** – accessible

**North Devon** – accessible

**South Hams** – accessible

**Torrige** – District Council installed a ramp to the offices and automatic door.

**Tavistock** – Borough Council offices, ground floor accommodation with disabled access if needed.

**Teignbridge** – moved to Old Forde House in October 2010 – ground floor accommodation – fully compliant

**Exmouth** – Offices are on ground floor – Exmouth Town Council have installed a lift to the ceremony room.

**Okehampton** – Ground floor accommodation.