



An efficient process with satisfied customers means less time is spent sorting our problems as well as giving us pride in the service offered.

Case study: Her Majesty's Courts Service, Beds, Essex and Herts (HMCS)

The Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire Courts Board is a statutory non-executive advisory body, responsible under the Courts Act to contribute to local service improvements by assessing whether or not the Lord Chancellor is meeting his obligations to ensure that our courts operate efficiently and effectively. Across the area are over 1,600 judicial office holders, judges and magistrates, and approximately 800 staff serving three and a quarter million people. Therefore the service has a huge part to play in delivering a service to the community which strives to be customer focused, effective and efficient.

HMCS worked with G4S to achieve Charter mark across 33 of its sites, however when Customer Service Excellence (CSE) was introduced there was a need to make the transformation. Being more robust in nature CSE demands a long term approach. HMCS embraced the challenge and engaged the G4S team to help achieve the journey. Alison Mead, Area's Customer Service Action Team, remembers "We wanted the approach to customer service to be one that would provide us with benefits as well as the customer. An efficient process with satisfied customers means less time is spent in sorting out problems as well as giving us pride in the service we offer. It was on this basis that we embraced the structure that the Customer Service Excellence standard had to offer."

The Journey

At the start of the journey HMCS liaised with the G4S to get the best possible advice to ensure they were clear on the task ahead of them. They took advice in forming a project team and hosting seminars to engage everyone and identifying the current strengths and weaknesses in the customer service delivery and their ideas on change. Philippa Neaves, attended one of these workshops commented "The sessions gave us a focus for our customer service work and we knew what we wanted to achieve. The Customer Service Excellence application gave us something to work towards as a group."

G4S provided support to the HMCS team is helping explain new aspects of the CSE standard, such as understanding the customer's journey, which involved fully understanding how

customers view each stage of their contact with the organisation. Jeannine North, who helped conduct the exercise comments "I enjoyed the customer journey mapping and found it, unexpectedly, very enlightening. As well as getting some really positive feedback about our local court sites we also discussed at length the perceived weaknesses in the order to attend court for questioning processes. The customer felt that the person conducting the hearing appeared more often than not, to lack confidence and authority in challenging the debtor to ensure the process was meaningful." As a consequence of this feedback managers spoke to the staff who conducted these interviews and it was established that there was a real need to support staff by preparing and delivering a training programme to ensure there was a consistent understanding of the process and the authority with which it could take place.

Once delivered, the training gained positive feedback, one attendee commented "it was very valuable as I now feel I can conduct an Order to Obtain Information successfully and assertively." Therefore the journey towards achieving CSE highlighted how HMCS could improve its service by developing and offering appropriate training. Alison comments "The insight gained directly through discussions with customers, to obtain their experience and reactions throughout their dealings with HMCS has been a very powerful tool in enabling us to discover issues that we might have previously overlooked. It also gives weight to the need to instigate and carry through an improvement in the way in which we do our business."

In March 2009 G4S were delighted to assess HMCS and reward the team for all of its hard work. June Shurmer, the Lead Assessor, commented "we are particularly impressed with HMCS customer-focused culture throughout their staff. They deliver excellent customer service in an environment that actively encourages their participation towards driving service improvement." HMCS visions and values encompass putting its customers at the heart of its service and the feedback shows that this is clearly supported through its strategies and business plans. The organisation is the first HMCS Area to receive the Customer Service Excellence award, so they have now led the way for others to follow.

"It is difficult to say which aspect of applying for Customer Service Excellence has brought the most change, but it has probably been the customer journey mapping," says Jeannine, "This really gives a very clear picture of where you are succeeding and where you are not, in a way that you can never get just from surveys and we are looking forward to doing some more."