



The Standard's effectiveness has ensured that, during a decade of development, commitment to the programme has never wavered.

Case study: Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery (BM&AG)

BM&AG's vision is to develop a service that delivers world class museums at the cultural heart of Birmingham. Being a division of Birmingham City Council's Environment and Culture Directorate BM&AG is the largest local authority museum service in England, employing over 200 staff. BM&AG houses Nationally Designated collections of fine art, decorative art and social history across eight sites, welcoming 629,250 visitors in 2008/9. In addition, their global programme of lending ensured that over 3 million people visited exhibitions where BM&AG work was included.

The Customer Service Excellence standard has become a crucial tool in helping turn their vision into a reality.

The Journey

BM&AG had worked with G4S to attain the Charter Mark Standard in 1998, so when they embarked on the transition to the new Customer Service Excellence (CSE) standard G4S were the natural partner to lead the way. BM&AG quote "Our team consistently used Charter Mark as a framework for our business planning and as a vehicle to engage staff in organisational development, therefore CSE was a natural progression. It is testament to the Standard's effectiveness that during a decade of development, our commitment to the programme never once wavered."

BM&AG quickly recognised the CSE standard continued to provide an excellent framework, so they took aspired the make the transition to the new standard in just one year. Firstly the organisation appointed their Operational Management Team, consisting of ten managers, to oversee the project, as at the forefront of the organisations the team had access to senior management, staff, partners and customers, allowing them to drive a customer first approach. Throughout the journey G4S were on hand to provide support, Jane Warner from G4S remembers "the team were extremely committed and enthusiastic; we were never in any doubt that they would achieve the standard."

Simon Cane, Head of Museum Operations, commented "the sheer volume of excellent work that we produce and our desire to showcase it all in our application was initially quite overwhelming. But, it is because we embedded CSE in our

business planning framework that we were confident that all of our service areas would produce work that could fulfil the criteria effectively". The team also benefited from the whole hearted support of their senior management team and staff as CSE was a standing agenda item at all organisational team meetings.

The project team completed their application using G4S' online tool and worked hard to provide a united application, ensuring the work of individuals, teams and the wider organisations were represented.

The assessments took place at sites throughout Birmingham, enabling Mary Allen, G4S Lead Assessor to see what was actually happening on the ground. The assessor spoke to a range of stakeholders including customers, front-line employees and Managers. Shirley Chisholm, Visitor Operations Manager remembers "there is always an air of anticipation when the assessor visits one of our sites. Those that worry about it soon find out they have nothing to fear, as the assessors are expert in getting even the most reticent to share their thoughts, ideas and opinions!"

Following on from a successful assessment G4S were thrilled to awarded BM&AG with CSE to recognise their achievements. Since BM&AG have clearly recognised the benefit of achieving CSE commenting "there is no doubt that our customers benefit from our use of CSE as a business planning framework. The fact that we clearly set out our service standards and customers know what they can expect of us has resulted in fewer customer complaints and an increase in customer satisfaction."

The results also reflect this with 98.5% of visitors surveyed indicating that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the services offered. One of BM&AG regular customers has commented "I feel these days that staff really sing from the same song sheet, which is to make me feel welcome and as if I matter to the Museum". BM&AG are real ambassadors for the standard

"The confidence we have gained from the standard is infectious; our 'greeters' are opening doors for visitors on arrival and welcoming them with valuable venue information and visit planning materials. Others are helping with our Customer Insight programme and are engaged in gathering feedback from our customers. We are supplying information in more ways, face to face, through leaflets, plasma screens and through our web presence which empowers customers to make their own decisions about their visit."