

Practical steps to improving customer relations

**Armagh City and District Council
APSE and DOE Seminar
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Vision and Values

Vision:

That Armagh City and District will be an inclusive, progressive, outward looking area with a vibrant and diverse economy offering a high quality of life, within an attractive physical environment

Values:

- ✓ Inclusive: in partnership with all our stakeholders
- ✓ Open and Transparent: Communicating and consulting effectively

The Public Management Challenge

“to approach a problem by seeking the widest differences of opinions and by making the most careful study of the facts in the spirit of absolute impartiality and unselfishness, and then to solve it moderately, practicably, and logically, in accordance with the best ethical rules”

Confucius (Ancient China, 551 BCE – 479 BCE)

Who are our Customers?

- Characteristics of customers
 - Customers normally have choice
 - Customers normally provide revenue
 - Customers have certain rights, the right to exit

What about Citizens?

The rights of the citizen to influence public decisions which affect the quality of life

Citizens' rights

- ✓ Civil rights
- ✓ Political rights
- ✓ Social rights
- ✓ Human rights

Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

- Manipulation
- Therapy *Non-participation*
- Placation
- Informing *Tokenism*
- Consultation
- Partnership
- Delegated Power *Citizen Power*
- Citizen Control

Methods of involving our users and citizens

- Citizens' Surveys
 - Community Planning
 - Targeting Resources
- Citizens' Panel
 - Sustaining membership
- Household questionnaires
 - Good relations, Community Safety & Bonfires

Methods of involving our users and citizens

- Focus Groups
 - Keady Community Centre
- Electronic Complaints System
 - Customer service front line logging
 - Web site link
 - Tracking, timing and feedback
 - Service improvements
- Customer Survey
 - Orchard Leisure Centre & Palace Park

Benefits & Outcomes

- ✓ Evidence based decision making
- ✓ Services reflective of the needs of customers and citizens
- ✓ Targeted resources
- ✓ Customer satisfaction
- ✓ Customer/Citizen focused case study

Case Study

Armagh City and District Council
Good Relations Strategy

Developing Good Relations Strategy

Developing a Good Relations Strategy linked to the Council's Corporate Plan –

Investing in Our Community:

To undertake initiatives which bring benefits and goodwill to all sectors of the community and which attract visitors, investments and resources that enrich the area

Inclusive

Initiating positive leadership partnerships with employees, local communities, statutory and voluntary agencies, in addressing issues in the work we do

Developing Good Relations Strategy

Planning	Setting up a cross-departmental working group of council employees to look at Good Relations for race; religion and political opinion
Rapport	Team building with group; recognising differences of team; constructively challenging; celebrating milestones
Information	Primary and secondary research. 2000 questionnaires sent out with over 400 responses. Considered six areas namely, community involvement; religion; political opinion; race; disability and sexual orientation. Focus groups with targeted consultations with 'hard to reach' groups. Many positive and negative aspects of Good Relations throughout the area
Clarifying	Bringing all the information together and 'future scoping'
Evaluating	Three year strategy – Annual reporting mechanism Survey to be repeated in 2008

Quotes from Citizens on Good Relations

“Good Relations needs to be something which has a value in society. If District Councils are to be involved they need to show leadership.”

“The Council could organise more community events and social gatherings on a regular basis.”

Good Relations Strategy

Findings – Considerable positives and negatives
Four key themes emerged

- Creating Involvement and awareness
- Celebrating cultural diversity
- Civic Pride
- Investing in our futures

**Good Relations
People Results**

- Audit provided evidence base to develop strategy
- Community Concert – Ronan Keating
- Establishment of support groups for migrant workers (Polish & Lithuanian)
- Anti-Racist & Equality Project
- Community Dialogue Programme
- Development of additional projects underway

**Good Relations
Customer Results**

- Opened communication pathways with large number of stakeholders, both statutory and community
- Project team fully involved in the development of strategy
- Scrutiny Panel of Councillors fully participated in development of the Strategy
- Equality Commission highlighted Good Relations Audit as example of good practice
- Highlighted much good practice within the Council

**Good Relations
Impact on Society**

- Council have taken a leadership role in promoting Good Relations
- Highlighted the improvements and concerns that people had about the six areas e.g. people agreed that only 'disability badge' holders should park in disabled parking bays; Council to introduce 'clamping' on its own property
- Greater willingness of people to become involved
- Instilling a culture of Civic Spirit – sharing social spaces
- Attracting many additional visitors into the City and District

**Good Relations
Key Performance Results**

- ✓ Councillors and staff committed to making the Good Relations Vision a reality
- ✓ Major Good Relations Civic Event
- ✓ Significant reduction of flags and emblems flying throughout the City and District
- ✓ Created new relationships with significant stakeholders
- ✓ Ethnic minorities officer appointed to assist integration

Good Relations Vision

Armagh City and District Council will commit to develop, promote and inspire good relations amongst all citizens to enable everyone to fully participate and engage in creating a vibrant community respectful of difference

Good Relations – Inspiring Each Other

“Good relations have to begin at a very early age. If parents do not bring children up to be good citizens in their own community there is little hope of them making any attempt to being good citizens of the world. Good relations need to start at home”

We all need to ‘inspire each other’