



### Local Authority Annual Performance Report 2020-21

**Local Authority:** Cambridgeshire

#### Introduction

GRO acknowledge that 2020/21 has been an extremely challenging year for the Local Registration Service in England and Wales. Civil Registration has never had a higher profile, or more important role to play in supporting society in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is as a result of the flexibility, hard work, dedication and professionalism of your teams that the delivery of this key public service has been maintained.

Whilst Proper Officers are required to provide annual assurance to the Registrar General it is recognised that your current focus will be on maintaining service delivery and planning pandemic recovery activity. Following feedback from the National Panel for Registration on the pressures currently faced by the local registration service GRO have extended the submission date for the annual report to 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021 to help support local authorities.

In order to complete your Annual Performance Report, you should refer to 'The Proper Officers Guide to Registration Service Delivery' (the PO Guide) and associated appendices. For guidance log on to the [Registrar's Website](#). For ease of reference, the relevant sections of the PO Guide have been listed within each element of this template.

If you have any problems in completing the report, please contact your Compliance Officer – Dale Mason. [dale.mason@hmpo.gov.uk](mailto:dale.mason@hmpo.gov.uk) Tel – 07771378257.

### Part A: Key Performance Indicators and Key Performance Targets

In this section you are required to report on your performance in terms of registration timeliness for 2020/21. In the "comments" section of the tables please explain the reasons for any under-performance, trends identified between the two years and where appropriate provide details of any proposed remedial action or good practice. To assist in the completion of this section, refer to PO Guide 6.2-6.5 and appendices A1: Good Practice Guide: Statutory Standards and A2: Good Practice Guide: Operational Service Delivery and Performance Standards.

#### Part A (i). Key Performance Targets / Indicators

Registration timeliness (national target)	2019-2020 (CPU to populate)	2020-2021 (Please provide percentage attainment level)
Births - 98% registered within 42 days	99%	96%
Still births - 98% registered within 42 days	95%	100%
Deaths with MCCDs (no coronial involvement) - 90% registered within 5 days	77%	67%

## Part A (ii). Key Performance Targets - Appointments

	Electronic diary reports (tick)	Periodic diary checks (state the frequency)	Other (please specify)
Confirmation you have an appropriate appointment monitoring mechanism in place	✓		Zipporah booking system is used to provide details. Checks are made on a daily basis to see when the earliest appointment available is, and that it is within the required timescales.

## Part B: Customer Engagement Strategy

In this section you are required to confirm that a customer engagement strategy is in place. Refer to PO Guide 6.30-6.32 and appendix A4: Customer Engagement Strategy Framework.

### Part B: Customer Engagement Strategy

	Yes (tick)	No (tick)	Comments
i. Do you have a Customer Engagement Strategy in place?	✓		
ii. If you measure Customer Satisfaction and you have numerical values please provide the latest figures for 2020/21			N/A - all feedback recorded but no numerical data collated

## Part C: Public Protection & Counter Fraud

In this section you should be working to provide assurance against the PPCF Assurance Framework. To the best of your knowledge has your service delivered against all elements of the Framework in the period covered by this report?

### Part C (i). Public Protection & Counter-Fraud

Yes (tick)	✓	<i>If 'yes' please self-assess against all elements of the PPCF Assurance Framework by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and highlight any exceptions to your local Compliance Officer.</i>
No (tick)		<i>If 'no' please provide details of any known exceptions below and ensure you self-assess against all elements of the PPCF Assurance Framework by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021.</i>
Comments		

Refer to PO Guide 6.6-6.29 and appendix A3: Public Protection and Counter Fraud Assurance Framework. The GRO Compliance & Performance Unit will undertake local field checks to ensure that supporting evidence provides an accurate reflection of local authority overall performance.

Criteria	Monitoring in place for each element		Number of elements...	...of which	
	Yes	No Please detail, by number and title, elements not being monitored and proposed remedial action / work in progress (e.g. 7.3 Data protection: technical audits to be introduced )		Compliant	Not compliant Please detail, by number and title, non-compliant elements and proposed remedial action / work in progress (e.g. 1.1 Statutory deadlines: Training to be introduced to ensure earliest appointment offered)
1. Pre-Registration	✓		6	6	

2. Point of Registration	✓		8	8	
3. Post-Registration	✓		12	12	
4. Certificates	✓		4	4	
5. Service Models (where applicable)	✓		5	5	
6. Sham Marriage	✓		4	4	
7. Data Protection	✓		10	10	
8. Registration Online (RON)	✓		5	5	
9. Stock and Security	✓		8	8	
10. Fraud	✓		4	4	
11. Other	✓		3	3	

## Part D: Statutory and Operational Service Delivery Standards

In this section you should be working to **all** statutory and operational service delivery standards. To assist in the completion of this section, refer to PO Guide 6.2-6.5 and appendices A1: Good Practice Guide: Statutory Standards and A2: Good Practice Guide: Operational Service Delivery and Performance Standards.

### D1. Statutory Delivery Standards

1.Registration Appointments, 2.Events Registered, 3.Declarations, 4.Requisitioning, 5.MCCD Scrutiny, 6.Statistics Collection, 7.Burial Certificates, 8.Corrections/Re-registrations, 9.Notices of Marriage/CP, 10.Ceremonies/ Formations, 11.CP Conversions, 12.Marriage/CP Registered, 13.Bi-lingual Notices/Registrations, 14.Approved Premises Applications, 15.Office Plans, 16. Custody of Records, 17.Index Availability, 18.Certificate Issue, 19.Quarterly Certified Copies, 20.Notifications (weekly returns), 21.Sham Marriage Reporting, 22.Citizenship Ceremonies, 23.Citizenship Certificates

	Yes (tick)	No (tick)
Have all standards as listed above been met?		✓

**If 'No' please provide comment below on any standards not achieved which are not as a direct result of COVID-19 pandemic pressures.**

Of the 23 standards required the only one not met in full is item 2.

This is solely in relation to death registrations (which continue to be a national and regional issue). We feel confident that progress with local Medical Examiner implementation, and changes being made with regard to the Coroner Service, would have led to some improvement in our metrics had COVID not impacted.

### D2. Operational Standards

1. Customer Service  
2. Business Continuity and Resource  
3. Leadership and Learning & Development

	Yes (tick)	No (tick)
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Have all standards as listed above been met?		✓
If 'No' please provide comment below on any standards not achieved which are not as a direct result of COVID-19 pandemic pressures.		
Of all the requirements the only ones not fully met is:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance data is shared with staff and appropriate partners, but not wider, as corporate policy is not to do so</li> </ul>		

## Part E: Service Delivery and Business Continuity Plans

Local Authorities are required to have both Service Delivery and Business Continuity Plans established in respect of civil registration. To assist in the completion of this section, refer to PO Guide 5.1-5.5; 5.20 and appendix F: Business Continuity Plan.

E1. Service Delivery Plan		
	Yes (tick)	No (tick)
Do you have a Service Delivery Plan in place?	✓	

E2. Business Continuity Plan		
	Yes (tick)	No (tick)
Do you have a Business Continuity Plan in place?	✓	
If 'No' please provide comment:		
<p><b>If 'Yes' please provide a brief comment on the plan and if this was sufficient to respond to the challenges the COVID-19 Pandemic presented:</b></p> <p>Whilst the Business Continuity Plan (BCP) did not explicitly cover the impact of COVID it did provide a useful framework for rapid and pragmatic decision making throughout. The only specific aspect not included was a national / local lockdown scenario. A "lessons learned" review will be carried out and factored into the revised BCP during 2021-22.</p> <p>Over successive years a significant investment in self-service strategies for customers has driven a large volume of channel shift, including online payments This has enabled us to be quick to respond to the challenges of COVID, giving us the ability to reconfigure our systems, moving from self-service to mediated (and back again) as Government guidance has required. In this way we have been able to proactively modulate availability of appointments to meet customer demand – including dealing with backlogs. We have also been able to manage customer and partner, expectations, and communications relatively easily.</p>		
<p><b>Did you use any additional guidance documents (such as local flu plans or the national 'Planning for a Possible Influenza Pandemic' guidance?):</b></p> <p>Whilst these were revisited at the start of the first lockdown there was nothing that the service had not already considered.</p>		
<p><b>In terms of the national COVID-19 easements you introduced what worked effectively for your service?</b></p>		

#### The Emergency Bill easements:

- permitting telephone appointments for death registrations (as well as the electronic sharing of MCCDs and “greens”) was extremely beneficial to all involved in the bereavement journey, and there is no doubt that without this we would not have been able to meet the excess demand faced. We continue to support this becoming a permanent change, until such time as wider national transformation work can be completed.
- relaxation over who could sign MCCDs and / or timescales was useful during peak death periods, but creates other risks, so is not one we support as a permanent change.
- extending the period for citizenship ceremonies from 3 months to 6 months was invaluable, to release resources to focus on death registrations
- the ability to deliver citizenship ceremonies virtually was not particularly beneficial. This was for a variety of reasons:
  - the length of time it took for the decision to be made and process shared
  - it created unreasonable customer expectations, such as where customers lived abroad or where resources needed to be directed to death registrations
  - the Home Office had resource issues, and initially the email sent to customers was not clear about what the LRS were able to do
  - postal delays / issues created a huge risk of documents going missing when posted after virtual ceremonies, and in some cases customers then had to wait a further 3+ months for replacement certificates.

In Cambridgeshire we did not use some of the two stage registration processes available, or pilot, as we were able to operate safely without the need to do so.

#### **Please provide any additional supporting information to outline your registration services response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and summarise the operational support underpinned by the Local Authority:**

In the weeks leading up to the first lockdown some discussions had already taken place considering various scenarios – although it wasn’t until the day itself that the concept of a national lockdown was more widely considered.

Throughout the pandemic the expertise of the Registration Service was acknowledged by the Local Authority, and full support was received – although this did sometimes require robust discussions before agreement was reached. Despite a major impact on the bottom line (from reduced income, refunds / fees waived and additional costs) the Local Authority was aware that all possible mitigation was in place. This trust and confidence in the management team enabled the service to swiftly react to the ever-changing scenarios, and meant we recovered relatively rapidly from backlogs created by the Government’s restrictions.

The Emergency Bill was approved on the Thursday, guidance from GRO on implementation was received on the Friday and everything was in place (staff, customers, website, booking system) ready for Monday. Huge concerns were expressed (given the potential length of lockdown) about mental health and well being of staff registering back to back deaths all day every day at home, so (in discussion with Public Health, Health & Safety, Joint Management Committee) permission was granted to operate (following all COVID secure requirements) from 4 of the normal (6) locations. This has undoubtedly aided service delivery, and robust COVID measures mean that no staff contracted COVID or had to self-isolate due to working arrangements.

IT limitations and logistical issues involved in co-ordinating staff across other services in the Local Authority, who all moved to working remotely, meant that the operational structure suffered greatly initially. The IT was shored up quite quickly, but we have found some qualitative and quantitative issues related to the effectiveness of the Contact Centre, which has had unfortunate consequences for workloads.

Before the end of the first lockdown a clear plan was in place for recovery, depending on what was permitted. This meant that Cambridgeshire was able to clear the birth registration backlog, and facilitate urgent notices, in a timely manner – whilst maintaining death registration volumes. This was also done in a way that did not place unreasonable burdens on staff to work excessive additional hours, with a view to

ensuring that we were well placed to cope with the demands of the pandemic for a very prolonged period. This has been successful in the sense that with over 65 staff (in 75 roles) there has only been 1 person with any work-related stress absence – and working with them this was limited to just 2 weeks. One member of staff did suffer anxiety in the first lockdown, so was temporarily redeployed to the local COVID hub – but returned to the service in late summer 2020.

During each period of restrictions around what, if any, ceremonies could take place a robust “triage” process was in place – which was in part used to help shape some of the national guidance.

To control numbers in any room / building all our registration locations have remained with closed doors and no reception facility – with staff collecting customers from outside the building. In Cambridge a large covered area, clearly marked out, was created due to the volumes involved.

Initially permission was granted to waive the normal admin fee for changing a ceremony booking, and in some cases any fee increases due, if the original date booked fell into a lockdown period. When it became clear that the Ministry of Justice had declined to facilitate any extension to authority periods, despite pressure to do so, the Joint Management Committee also agreed to waive new notice fees in a very limited range of scenarios. To support our Approved Venue partners, it was also agreed that when they next applied an additional year would be added to the approval period, in effect giving them one year “free” in recognition of the pandemic impact. To date these measures alone have cost the Local Authority over £175k.

The service has been mindful of the impact of all aspects of the pandemic (not just at work) on all staff and have been able to access a wide range of well-being and other resources offered by the Local Authority.

There is no doubt that the local arrangements (around any national easements) and pragmatic forward thinking approach from the extended management team, and the approach to use of staff resources, has led to a positive outcome over all.

As a service we look forward to the national “lessons learned” opportunities, particularly given the challenges that are still arising even now, because of a Government (including Ministers, Cabinet Office and Ministry of Justice) to support key proposals or even timely communication requests that were made by National Panel and / or GRO on occasion.

## Part F: Registration Scheme Issues and Service Delivery Plans

You are required, for registration scheme purposes, to confirm that the information in the tables below are included in your Service Delivery Plan. Please confirm that the following information is included and whether or not there were changes implemented during 2020-21 or if any are proposed in 2021-22. To assist in the completion of this section, refer to PO Guide 3.4-3.8 and appendix C: Code of Practice.

F1. Please confirm that the following information, which is required for registration scheme purposes, is included in your current Service Delivery Plan	Tick
The number, names and boundaries of registration districts and sub-districts within the local authority	✓
The number of principal officer posts appointed within each district and sub-district	✓
The location of register offices, head offices and other service delivery points within each registration district (e.g. including hospitals and other outstations)	✓
Access and service availability times including emergency 'out of hours' arrangements; telephone numbers	✓

F2. Changes to Registration Service Provision					
	During 2020-2021		Planned 2021-2022		If Yes please provide details below:
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
(i) Boundaries and districts		✓		✓	
(ii) Principal Officer Posts abolished and/ or created	✓			✓	An additional RBD post was created on 1 <sup>st</sup> September, to facilitate birth registrations by multiple LRS. This is now in place with Suffolk.
(iii) Service point locations		✓	✓		<p>Cambridgeshire County Council is vacating the entire "Shire Hall site" in Cambridge, which includes the Cambridgeshire Register Office.</p> <p>Whilst the new Shire Hall sits in Alconbury (to the north of Huntingdon) the Cambridgeshire Register Office will remain in Cambridge. This relocation will now be in early 2022, as the project to update the site on Roger Ascham Road has been delayed.</p>
(iv) Service opening times and telephone numbers	✓		✓		<p>The impact of COVID has meant that our Addenbrookes and Wisbech locations have not been in use since March 2020, and there are not any current dates for re-opening them. All customers have been able to access our services through alternative delivery points or telephone registrations.</p> <p>A planned review of service provision in the Fenland area has been delayed due to COVID.</p>

Acknowledgement	
Document prepared by (name)	Louise Clover
Role in the registration service	Registration Service Manager
Date	11 <sup>th</sup> June 2021

Declaration
I hereby confirm that this document provides an accurate reflection of civil registration performance of this local authority and declare that the local authority;

- continues to commit to meeting the national standards contained in the Good Practice Guide and the principles of the Code of Practice;
- is committed to maintaining or improving performance as appropriate in accordance with the local performance plan agreed with the GRO Regional Compliance Officer
- is committed to the local application of the Public Protection and Counter-Fraud framework in accordance with the Home Office agenda; and
- understands that GRO will make available statistical performance data amongst local authorities to support regional and national performance benchmarking and improvement.

Name: Peter Gell

Date: 14/06/2021

Signature:



(Proper Officer for Registration Matters)

The completed report should be returned to [cpu@gro.gov.uk](mailto:cpu@gro.gov.uk) and copied in to your Compliance Officer Dale Mason **by 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021**