



Assessment Report

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE





1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the assessment, High Life Highland-Libraries were found to have a deep understanding of, and commitment to, Customer Service Excellence. The commitment was displayed from Senior Management levels through to operations and front-line staff.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those people involved in the overall assessment process. It has been a pleasure meeting with your team and having the opportunity to observe your service in action.

The outcome of the assessment was -

“Continued award of the Customer Service Excellence Standard has been recommended”

Address:	Library Support Unit, Harbour Road, Inverness, IV1 1UA		
Standard(s):	Customer Service Excellence	Accreditation Body(s)	UKAS
Representative:	John West		
Site(s) assessed:	Library Support Unit Invergordon Library Dornoch Library Plockton Library Mobile Library (Wester Ross) Portree Library Ullapool Library Gairloch Library Dingwall Library	Date(s) of audit(s):	20-05-2019, 21-05-2019, 22-05-2019, 23-05-2019, 24-05-2019



	Helmsdale Library Golspie Library Lairg Library Glenurquhart Library		
Lead Assessor:	Robert Sullivan	Additional team member(s):	
Type of Assessment:	Annual Review		
Review of Certification Claims	Claims are accurate and in accordance with SGS guidance		



2. CONTEXT

High Life Highland (HLF) is a charity registered in Scotland, formed on the 1st October 2011 by The Highland Council to develop and promote opportunities in culture, learning, sport, leisure, health and wellbeing. It delivers a wide range of cultural, sporting, leisure, learning and health & wellbeing initiatives and projects across 9 services throughout the whole of the Highlands, for both residents and visitors.

High Life Highland-Libraries serve a geographically wide and socially diverse area roughly the size of Belgium. There are 30 public, 10 communities, 21 schools, 8 mobile Libraries and a prison library. The school libraries are not included within the scope of this assessment.

With a £3.4m budget, 168 staff are employed by High Life Highland-Libraries. The service has seen over 3.5 million visits to libraries during 2018/19, a 16% increase from the previous year. This includes 1.3 million online visits. The number of participants at events in libraries has also increased this year by 14%, with a recorded 410,000 attendees.

You have invested in your facilities and new or refurbished facilities at Culloden and the Children's area at Fort William being good examples of this.

Your library at Ullapool now has an integrated service point providing a range of Council services including the Registrar. In addition, the High Life Ranger service has a presence at Ullapool and Fort William.

3. METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

The assessment was undertaken in two stages; the first was a review of your self-assessment submission. This review enabled the assessor to gain an understanding of how the organisation has met the requirements of the Customer Service Excellence standard.

The next stage was to review the actual service delivered on-site. This was conducted through reviewing practice as well as speaking to staff, partners and customers. This included following customer journeys through your processes and how these aligned with customer insight.

During the assessment process the criteria are scored on a four-band scale:



COMPLIANCE PLUS - Behaviours or practices which exceed the requirements of the standard and are viewed as exceptional or as exemplar to others, either within the applicant's organisation or the wider customer service arena.

COMPLIANT - Your organisation has a variety of good quality evidence which demonstrates that you comply fully with this element. The evidence which reflects compliance is consistent throughout and is embedded in the culture of the organisation.

PARTIAL COMPLIANCE - Your organisation has some evidence but there are significant gaps. The gaps could include:

- Parts of the applicant's organisation which are currently not compliant and/or
- Areas where the quality of the evidence is poor or incomplete and/or
- Areas which have begun to be addressed and are subject to significant further development and/or
- Areas where compliance has only been evident for a very short period of time

NON COMPLIANT - Your organisation has little or no evidence of compliance or what evidence you do have refers solely to a small (minor) part of your organisation.

The current scheme allows applicants a maximum number of partial compliances, equating to a pass mark of 80% for all criteria.

4. OPENING MEETING

The on-site assessment commenced with an opening meeting.

The assessment activity was discussed. The itinerary had been agreed with High Life Highland - Libraries in advance. The organisation was informed that all information obtained during the assessment would be treated as strictly confidential.

The scope of Assessment was confirmed as: High Life Highland - Libraries

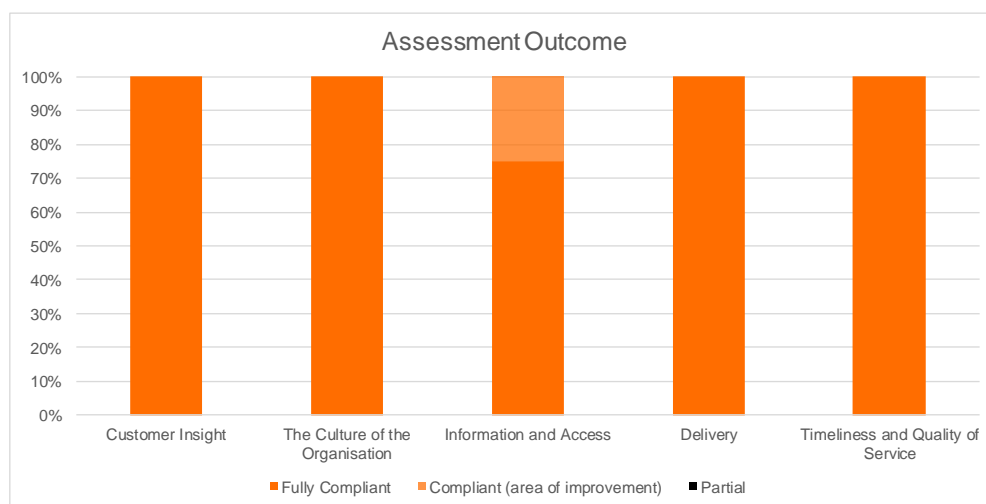
5. ON-SITE ASSESSMENT

The Assessor was accompanied throughout the assessment by John West and Julie Corcoran and other personnel within the organisation were involved when assessing activities within their responsibility.



The assessment resulted in the raising of no partial compliances. A number of observations are listed in Section 7 of this report.

	Criterion	Maximum number of partial compliances	Actual number of non-compliances	Actual number of partial compliances	Actual number of Areas for Improvement	Fully Compliant
1	Customer Insight	2	0	0	0	11
2	The Culture of the Organisation	2	0	0	0	11
3	Information and Access	2	0	0	3	9
4	Delivery	3	0	0	0	13
5	Timeliness and Quality of Service	2	0	0	0	10



6. AREAS OF PARTIAL COMPLIANCE

CRITERION 1

No Partial Raised

CRITERION 2

No Partial Raised

CRITERION 3

No Partial Raised

CRITERION 4

No Partial Raised



CRITERION 5

No Partial Raised

7. OBSERVATIONS

A list of observations and issues identified at each facility is held by the Management team at the Libraries service. This report summaries the findings.

It was clear that the Senior Leadership, including the Directorate, are very customer focused and have a clear vision for High Life Highland- Libraries as a modern, progressive and customer focused organisation. They have used the Customer Service Excellence Standard, feedback and reports to further improve the service.

Such is this commitment and the benefits experienced from CSE you are currently preparing other High Life Highland services for CSE certification.

Throughout this assessment, a significant number of staff referred to Customer Service Excellence and its benefit to the work of the service.

During the site assessment the following general observations were made. These include: positive areas scored as Compliance Plus; areas of good practice; areas for improvement identified throughout the entire assessment process, as listed below.

Areas for Improvement cleared from last assessment

- At the last assessment, the Assessor observed that although your signage has significantly improved there was still some legacy signage. One example being the doors at Fort William. Your Marketing manager has developed mock signage for the venue, and this is moving forward (3.1.1)
- In 2018, the Assessor also noted that for some books, such as mental health, you may wish to consider if there could be 'take away' publications, leaflets with links to appropriate e-books and so forth. This may assist those customers who suffer from stigma relating to their health and wellbeing in overcoming any challenges to accessing materials. You have added such material to your e-book collection, and you are currently developing a leaflet with links to other resources including the e-books (3.2.1)

- It is noted that your Commercial Manager is investigating and testing further ways to promote donations. It was also noted during this 2019 visit that donation boxes and publicity appeared to be more visible (3.2.2)
- Last year, the Assessor noted that you may wish to consider your practices regarding renewal of borrowed items. You have reviewed this and are satisfied that the current practice compares well with other Library Services. You seek to balance the needs of various stakeholders and to ensure that a variety of stock is available for those browsing in your venues (3.3.1)
- At the last assessment, the Assessor noted that you may wish to consider if the initial traffic flow system at Inverness Library could be improved to create a more welcoming physical environment for customers. This remains as previously whilst consideration is given to the future development of this facility. You have put in place places to remove gates and refurbish parts of the Library soon. This will take place alongside the establishment of a Business Hub at this facility (3.3.3)
- At the last assessment, the Assessor observed that the carpeting at Fort William Library could be considered for replacement or deep cleaning to improve the initial perception of the service. You have deep cleaned the carpet (3.3.3)

Areas for Improvement

- You may wish to consider more regular and focussed social media postings to promote the work of your service and publicise events and other services.

You should consider using a wider breadth of social media channels such as Instagram and Twitter to target different demographics. In particular to engage Young People (3.2.1)

- You may also wish to consider better and more proactively promoting the advantages of Gift Aid and having some supplies of Gift Aid envelopes readily available at facilities.

You may also wish to consider if book and other fines could be replaced by donations linked perhaps to Gift Aid. This is, of course, a commercial decision that would require investigation by your organisation (3.2.2)



- You may wish to investigate the possibility of greater functionality from your mobile App. One example may be the use of the App as the customers Library or High Life Highland ticket (3.3.1)

Areas of Good Practice

- It is abundantly clear that your service has used CSE to develop a very customer centric service that works alongside a range of partners to produce outcomes that meet their needs and preferences. The service continues to evolve and innovate in ways that improve the impact of your service on individual customers as well as on groups and wider society. At this assessment there were high levels of creativity and innovation demonstrated including improved and enhanced partnership working
- You have a very clear focus on improving the numbers of visits to your facilities and events being delivered there. This clear direction and use of graphical performance reporting in these key issues is focusing staff on your core business
- You have continued to support others in sharing your knowledge and expertise and by assisting them in improving the customer service they offer. This includes Library services from across the country and other CSE Holders. You are also now proactively working to have other parts of High Life Highland certificated to the CSE Standard. You have continued your innovative partnership with colleagues in an Austrian Library service to exchange ideas and delivered a presentation at an Austrian Conference disseminating your Good Practice
- More locally you have delivered inputs to such as the Community Sport Scotland conference, and organisations including Glasgow Life, Perth and Kinross, Live Borders and North Ayrshire
- The Assessor observed that staff were very polite, friendly and professional when interacting with customers. This was supported by survey results and in the comments of a range of stakeholders that Assessor spoke with during the assessment visit
- The Assessor spoke with many staff about the needs and preferences of your customers. Staff had a very good understanding in relation to their Library as well as individual customers
- Once more at this assessment, the Assessor noted that staff were very proactive in seeking out books for their customers to best ensure speed of access to the latest materials to suit customer preferences



- Your posters and information were well displayed throughout the sites visited at this assessment. The displays were professionally formatted giving a clean look to displayed materials
- You have made your Facebook social media presence more localised. Staff at local libraries can create, curate and manage social media postings that are unique and relevant to their facility. You now have 11 sites with their own dedicated Facebook page. This is viewed as being very successful in increasing footfall and in promoting library events. The Assessor was able to speak with some staff involved
- You have a library App for mobile devices which is viewed as successful. You continue to improve the App to allow for greater functionality. This was discussed at viewed at a local level
- You have invested in your facilities and new or refurbished facilities at Culloden and Fort William being good examples of this
- You have further developed your benchmarking activities with colleagues and CSE holders to learn from and share good practice. In addition, colleagues and fellow CSE holders, Glasgow Life, utilise your comprehensive customer surveys. Other services moving to Charitable Trust status have asked for presentations and visit your service to view good practice
- You continue to develop, implement and learn from comprehensive customer surveys and other feedback mechanisms
- You have very high levels of customer satisfaction. You have recently completed a comprehensive survey of adult customers and achieved an overall customer satisfaction rate of 98%
- You have again significantly increased the number of events hosted by your service and in doing this have seen significant increases in the number of customers using your service. This performance data was viewed by the Assessor at this assessment visit
- During the assessment, the Assessor was impressed by the enthusiasm of staff towards creating new and innovative events to encourage greater use of the Library for a wider variety of activities. The Assessor was able to discuss and see examples of several new events

- You have worked with a range of partners in innovative ways to improve service delivery and accessibility for customers and potential customers. There were numerous examples of this including your work with the High Life Highland Ranger Service and the introduction of Nature Explorer packs. This is very innovative and links with wider High Life Highland, Council and Scottish Government objectives around health and wellbeing. The Assessor also saw evidence of several book clubs held in other locations being supported by your resources. You continue to work with partners in the NHS in a variety of ways including work to improve health and wellbeing across the Highlands
- You assist in the wider community in many ways and integrate this into learning and the Library. You are working with the Highland Biological Recording Group and assisting them in the development of An Atlas of Wasps in the Highlands. This also fits with the wider agenda of supporting the development of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and maths) in the community
- You have an ongoing partnership with the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) who use your Library Collections for research, training and learning. In particular, this relates to your special collection, the Charles Fraser Mackintosh collection. Students and lecturers have access to resources and student award winners get access to a tailor-made placement at High Life Highland. This partnership also facilitates access to the valuable collections to local citizens and involves Library Staff, University staff and volunteers. A student now gives presentations to Library members and others within the Library setting. Your Principal Libraries Manager acts as a joint supervisor with an academic for the research student involved. The Principal Libraries Manager is also presenting to other UHI venues including Perth
- You have now developed a 'one stop shop' membership application process and card that covers access to leisure facilities via a common High Life Highland card
- The 'Get to Know Your Library' Baby Massage class at Fortrose Library which won an award for provision of a tailored Bookbug group remains popular and continues
- You understand the changing demographics of your environment as well as the needs and preferences of your customers and prospective customers. You engage with customers, prospective customers and representative groups to facilitate better access to materials and the



service. This includes work with such as teenagers at Fortrose and such as autism and dementia awareness training across the network

- You are aware of evolving community groups and customers and work to support any changes. You have enhanced your Polish Collection at Inverness Library and work with a local Polish School to understand the needs and preferences of that community
- You work with specific groups such as teenagers in order to make your service more applicable and attractive to them
- Once you consult with customers, you act on their suggestions where possible and appropriate. You are, for example, relocating the Teenage area at Glenurquhart Library to a more discrete and comfortable area
- In order to reach out to additional prospective groups and to add value to those groups you continually innovate. You are currently looking to provide 'Mind Hubs' to support those who may be experiencing social isolation
- You continue to monitor the use of information sources across channels through measurement of visits as well as website and social media activity
- You fully recognise the importance of praising and recognising staff for their customer focus. You have nominated a number of staff for awards in the High Life Awards process this year
- You continue to promote and develop a number of volunteers within the service and new volunteering policies in place. You received funding for a programme called 'High Voltage' through the Scottish Library Information Council and this is in progress. You now have 130 volunteers and these volunteers can access a range of qualifications such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the High Life Highland Leadership Awards
- Your Aviemore facility has been identified as a 'Centre of Excellence' in the National Library Strategy for Scotland and by the Scottish Government. In addition, a working party has revisited the facility as part of their work leading to the development of the National School Libraries Strategy

- Working with Education Service and the Scottish Book Trust, you targeted Primary 1 pupils to encourage Library membership. Part of the 'Every Child a Library Member' strategy this was assisted through 'Bridging the Gap' funding. This is now an ongoing programme and you are working with Education as part of the 'Read, Write, Count' campaign from the Scottish Government. You continue to support the work of the wider Libraries and Information community. You currently have a staff member seconded to the Scottish Library and Information Council
- The new Business Hub at Inverness Library is funded by the Scottish Library and Information Council
- The Assessor observed, and you evidenced, very significant local staff input into tailoring initiatives and joint working in very creative ways that would appeal to the members of that library. The creative talents, enthusiasm and 'going the extra mile' for customers was a theme throughout the assessment and across the wide range of services visited
- In the wider community you understand the ability to work with other partners to improve services to local communities. Some examples of this being your work with RBS at Dingwall, Culloden Polish Nursery School, Welfare Rights Officers and the Dingwall Dementia Town initiative
- All the customers spoken to by the Assessor during the assessment commended the staff and were pleased with the service delivery
- You evidenced a range of activities during this assessment including bookbug, technobots and class visits. This clearly showed customers enjoying their time at the Library and very good levels of rapport and interactions between library staff, customers and partners
- The Assessor visited a 'You Time' session where customers enjoyed and benefited from a 'Chair Yoga' session. This activity helped attract customers to the Library but also engage non-traditional fitness and wellbeing customers to exercise, wellbeing and potential the wider High Life Highland offer
- In addition, the Assessor met with a third-party provider from the Heartstone project and one of your own staff members. The Assessor was told about the project and its aims in working with both Primary and High Schools



- You have increased the number of family day activities to involve the family in events and activities at the Library
- It was pleasing to note that Library staff were enthusiastic and worked closely with colleagues and partners to provide the best possible service for your customers
- Overall, the service provided is of a high quality and is respected and valued by customers

Areas of Compliance Plus

- 1.1.1 You continue to have very high levels of insight about the characteristics of both customers and prospective customers through your surveys and exit polls. You are then using this to identify strategies to engage with these prospective customers more effectively. Your involvement in the development of library strategies for both public and school libraries nationally and your active participation in such as the Scottish Library Information Council (SLIC) and the 'How Good Is Our Public Library Service' (HGIOPLS) framework are examples of your strategic awareness and involvement at all levels. The involvement of your Principal Libraries Manager and other staff with SLIC and the additional benchmarking activities undertaken helps keep the service at the forefront of latest thinking
- 1.1.2 You have developed customer insight about our customer groups to better understand their needs and preferences and you demonstrate this across your network and with a wide range of customers. The Assessor spoke with a wide range of staff who had excellent and very detailed insight as to the needs and preferences of a wide range of customers. There were many examples of this at individual customer level as well as in relation to customer groups such as Nursery, School, Teens and Older Adults
- 1.1.3 You have made efforts to identify hard to reach and disadvantaged groups and individuals and have developed your services in response to their specific needs. As well as work with Education colleagues in such as 'Every Child a Library Member' and 'Read, Write Count', your ongoing innovative work with the Inverness Prison in manning their Library has given access to a hard to reach group. Likewise, your work with a Care Home Group for Older People has seen making care home residents, traditionally a hard to reach group, library members. The co-location of

libraries and leisure facilities has also improved the access to a wider range of citizens to the library service. This is further enhanced by a range of joint activities run by staff of leisure and library services that are seamlessly integrating physical and cognitive development to further improve outcomes for citizens and visitors. As noted earlier in this report your work with other community groups to improve access, learning and remove or reduce social isolation is commendable

- 1.2.2 You have made the consultation of customers integral to continually improving your service. You use a range of consultative methods to suit your customers, you have successfully consulted with a wide range of customers. One example of this being the consultation with Teenage members at Glenurquhart Library leading to a reconfiguration of the Library thus giving a dedicated area for Teenage readers
- 1.2.3 You regularly review and adapt your consultation strategies, tools and their effectiveness. You have a published engagement strategy that is regularly reviewed. Your use of exit polls to capture feedback of both current and prospective customers at co-located sites is one example of this in action
- 1.3.1 You have reliable and accurate methods to measure satisfaction on a regular basis. You have very comprehensive ways of measuring satisfaction across your customer groups on a regular basis. Your methods are viewed as accurate and reliable to the extent that several other organisations are utilising your customer surveys
- 1.3.5 You have made positive changes to services as a result of analysing customer experience, including improved customer journeys. There were numerous examples of this evidenced throughout this assessment visit. One example was the reconfiguration of opening hours to better suit the needs of the local community. An example of this being at Dornoch Library
- 2.1.1 There is strong commitment to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery and leaders in your organisation actively support this and advocate for customers. The Principal Libraries Manager and his team are striving to remove barriers to the use of the services to maximise the impact of the service whilst delivering excellent service quality effectively and efficiently

- 2.1.2 You have used customer insight to inform policy and strategy and to prioritise service improvement activity. In addition to this you use insight to revamp opening hours and reconfigure such as physical space, you have used insight to improve and evolve your service. You have now looked to enable volunteers to achieve vocational qualifications and other awards because of working with your service. You have further developed your 'You Time' programme because of work with colleagues within High Life Highland and other partners. You have extended your 'You Time' provision to several other libraries over the past year, this includes Fortrose, Golspie and Nairn. In addition, 'You Time' classes can now be booked online. You have used insight to consult with partners such as Alzheimer's Scotland to improve signage for customers
- 2.1.6 There is a strong culture of staff putting forward their ideas and being able to implement them. There is a recognition that the nature of the environment served is such that demands may be localised and local staff are ideally placed to meet them. During this assessment there were numerous excellent examples of staff using their own creativity alongside their insight about customers to create innovative displays and activities
- 2.2.2 Your staff are polite and friendly to customers and understand customer needs. Throughout the assessment and across all the facilities visited the Assessor observed this. The Assessor was informed by customers that staff have excellent levels of rapport and a genuine understanding of customer needs and preferences. There was a high degree of proactivity in assisting customers with such as book selection and reservations to meet their preferences. At this assessment there was an increased awareness of the benefits and need to be customer focused which was very reassuring. There was a high level of awareness of the challenges of visitor numbers and a focus on innovation to 'add value' to the library visit experience
- 2.2.5 You clearly value and promote the contribution your staff make to delivering customer focused services, and leaders, managers and staff demonstrate these behaviours. You are keen to discuss and promote the good work of staff that has improved the service to your customers. There was clear evidence of this in the number of nominations for Staff Awards and the way in which Senior Managers openly praise staff for their creativity and hard work



- 3.1.1 You have a range of easy to understand information about your service and this is available in several ways. Your website gives information about your service and allows you to conduct transactions. In addition, your App continues to develop to support mobile access to your service and information about your service. Customers can also get information about and access your services at any of your libraries.
- 3.3.3 You ensure that your facilities are as clean and comfortable as possible and continue to make significant investments in your facilities to improve this further where possible. You continue to invest in redeveloping libraries and spaces within Libraries where possible within budgetary constraints
- 3.4.1 You have continued to make arrangements with other providers and partners to offer and supply co-ordinated services, and these arrangements have demonstrable benefits for your customers. There is a good awareness of the need to provide effective 'joined up' services where possible and of opportunities that joint funding and partnership working can bring to library customers and the wider community. At this assessment you evidenced an increasing number of partnership working opportunities. Your work with such as the NHS and such as 'You Time' being examples of this. In working with colleagues across High Life Highland it is recognised that joined up working can offer better service provision and coverage. You gave good examples of programmes that included physical activity alongside work in the Library targeted at the Health and Wellbeing agenda. Your ongoing work with leisure colleagues, the University of Highlands and Islands and HM Prison Service are all examples of this
- 3.4.3 You interact within wider communities and demonstrate the ways in which you support those communities. Your very successful work with volunteers through your High Voltage programme has offered volunteering opportunities, training and development to 130 young people. Your work in physical and cognitive activities impacts directly on the wider Health and Wellbeing agenda as does work with NHS partners on such as 'prescription books'. You support the wider Library community through participation in exchanges including one with Austrian Colleagues. Your Principal Libraries Manager is a convenor on 'How Good Is Our Library Service' inspections



- 4.1.2 You closely monitor your performance against target and standards across a range of performance indicators. Importantly this information can be 'drilled into' to provide lower level data analysis to identify trends. Your Head of Performance is directly involved in the design, use and effective interrogation of data and this is also used extensively by the Principal Libraries Manager in the decision-making process. This performance tool and data is available to all staff
- 4.2.2 You demonstrated that you deliver the service you promise to individual customers and that outcomes are positive for the majority of your customers. You again have very high satisfaction levels (98%) as well as many positive qualitative statements supporting your high satisfaction levels. During the assessment, customers confirmed the very high levels of satisfaction with the service delivered across a range of large, smaller and mobile libraries
- 4.2.4 You actively seek out and learn from the work of other organisations as well as sharing and publishing your good practices. You support the University of the Highlands and Islands through your work with them on your special collections. Your Principal Libraries Manager is a joint supervisor for their research student on this project. You have also published and presented papers at Conferences. Your international work with colleagues in Austria is also an example of this. Your staff have participated in the Scottish CSE Networking Events and you share good practice with many organisations

8. ACTION PLANNING & NEXT STEPS

The achievement of Customer Service Excellence is an ongoing activity and it is important that High Life Highland - Libraries continues to meet the elements of the criteria throughout the three years the hallmark is awarded for. Efforts must be made by Customer Service Excellence holders to continually improve their service.

We recommend that you develop an action plan based on the findings of this report. The action plan does not need to be a separate document and is likely to be more effective if the actions are embedded in your normal improvement and service developments plans.

We will undertake an annual review that will look at your continued compliance with the Customer Service Excellence. As part of the review we will also look at progress on any findings of the previous assessments.



In addition to reviewing progress outlined above, we will also review the services delivery, done so by following customer journeys.

For more information on the annual review please refer to our document “Building on your Customer Service Excellence success – Preparing for the annual review”.

Holders must inform SGS of any major changes in the service provision covered by the scope of the certificate. This includes reorganisation or mergers.

In addition, SGS must be informed should the certified service experience a significant increase in customer complaints or critical press coverage.

If you are in doubt at any stage, we strongly recommend contacting the Customer Service Team for advice on the significance of any service or organisational change, or issues surrounding customer complaints.

SGS will visit within the next 12 months for the annual review.

SGS recommends that High Life Highland - Libraries retains a copy of this report to aid continuous improvement, and as a reference document for future assessment reviews.