

## CASE STUDY

# ANGUS COUNCIL BUILDING STANDARDS IMPROVES CUSTOMER SERVICE WITH LATEST CSE CERTIFICATION

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In early 2014 Angus Council Building Standards was re-certified to the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) standard. The service first achieved CSE certification in 2010, and last year was successfully reassessed for ISO 9001. Angus Council as a whole has also achieved Investors in People accreditation.

### ABOUT ANGUS COUNCIL BUILDING STANDARDS

Building Standards is the process by which any building work across the Angus Council area is checked for design and construction in accordance with minimum standards - as laid down by the government in the Building Regulations.

The Regulations are there to secure the health, safety, welfare and convenience of persons in or about buildings and of others who may be affected by buildings or matters connected with buildings, conserve fuel and power and advance sustainable development.

"It's about consenting and approving building work," says Len Murray, Building Standards Manager, Angus Council. "Building work requires a warrant, and we go through that process with our customers and verify their application. From large industrial buildings to private homes - they all require consent."

"A customer makes an initial enquiry or an application, and we deal with it from initial contact right the way through to completion of the build. We're assessing building applications, working on site, giving advice to architects, design teams, applicants and agents, and dealing with enforcement work."



A new school in the area with good accessibility

### WHY BUILDING STANDARDS CHOSE CSE CERTIFICATION

Len Murray believes that CSE carries more weight than traditional, internal tools because it is an external exercise.

"We are already audited internally, but are now audited externally, and we thought we were pretty good at delivering customer care," says Len Murray. "But when we decided to benchmark, we looked at the authority that scored well in the government audit and they had CSE. We wanted to aspire to better things. We wanted to listen to our customers better, listen to other service providers and learn from a continual improvement process."

### WHY BUILDING STANDARDS CHOSE SGS UNITED KINGDOM TO HELP

SGS was recommended by another authority in the process of moving from Chartermark to CSE. Following an initial meeting with an SGS assessor in 2008, Len Murray decided to go ahead.

"We didn't have Chartermark ourselves, but our SGS assessor helped us a huge amount. He appreciated what we were doing in Customer Service, and was able

to make helpful suggestions. His visits each year bring us something new to work on," says Len Murray.

The latest assessment was undertaken in two stages.

First, a review of the Building Service's self-assessment pack. This gave the assessor an understanding of how the organisation had met the requirements of the Customer Service Excellence standard.

Second, an on-site assessment that included a documentation review as well as interviews with staff, customers, representatives of partner organisations, and senior management.

"A huge amount of work went into the assessment," says Len Murray. "There are a lot of members of staff to thank, because you can't do it alone. It has to be a team effort."

**SGS**



A new building site undergoing consultation with Angus Council Building Standards

## BENEFITS OF THE STANDARD

The CSE standard is delivering internal and external benefits.

"We're hearing good remarks from councillors about the members of our team. And our customer satisfaction rates are high too," says Len Murray. In fact, currently around 96% feel that they are either very satisfied or satisfied with the service.

"Also, CSE has pulled the team closer together and enhanced the culture of customer service. CSE promotes a better culture of achievement for everyone."

The team is delivering effective internal communications. A Building Standards web portal attached to the Divisional Portal is proving key to good communication and the sharing of information. It now serves as the focal point for all procedures and quality matters in relation to Building Standards. It continues to be enhanced on a regular basis.

At a corporate level, the Council produces a regular newsletter, a weekly mini electronic newsletter and also communicates via the Council intranet, using Facebook or Twitter.

## EXTERNAL BENEFITS

The rapport between the Building Standards staff and customers impressed the SGS assessor.

Customers were highly complimentary about staff and the service, a number indicated that they felt staff were proactive in offering advice and this was seen as 'added value'.

They also said the time taken to progress applications was good compared to their individual experiences elsewhere.

What is more, Building Standards is giving back to the wider community - by helping other local authorities in their Customer Service Excellence journeys.

"Since doing it we've helped a number of building standards authorities achieve CSE. We've spoken to them, given presentations and given them our evidence as a benchmark," says Len Murray.

## ADVICE TO OTHERS TAKING THE CSE JOURNEY

"CSE is hard work, but it's well worth the effort," says Len Murray. "It's all about benefits. It protects you. If a customer comes to you and says they're having a poor service, then you have the evidence to prove it is an exception. It enhances the culture within the team, brings them together, allows continuous improvement, and ensures you deliver a good service."

SGS Senior CSE assessor Robert Sullivan adds:

"I have been privileged to work with Len and the team over a number of years now and I can honestly say that year-on-year there are significant innovations and improvements to service delivery.

In the early stages it was apparent that the service was making great progress by developing and refining processes, training staff and listening to customers.

"In recent years, the service has truly embedded CSE and its thinking into the routine work of the organisation. They have been extremely externally focused and transparent and give so much back to the wider 'Building Standards' community by helping them achieve Customer Service Excellence.

"I look forward to the team reaching out to others in the wider public and private sector to exchange ideas and innovations and to continue on their journey of continuous improvement.

"Len and his team deserve great credit in transforming the culture and operational effectiveness of the organisation through customer insight and focus."

## ABOUT SGS

SGS is the world's leading inspection, verification, testing and certification company. SGS is recognised as the global benchmark for quality and integrity. With more than 80,000 employees, SGS operates a network of over 1,650 offices and laboratories around the world.

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