

21st Century Services

Understanding its citizens is something which local government cannot afford to ignore as competition for resources, advances in technology and public expectations of high quality and low cost services raise the bar on what is an acceptable level of public service in the 21st century.

The challenge for 21st century councils will be to work harder to engage the public with fewer resources and to design services and access channels around the needs of their customers. The NEIEP 21st Century Services Programme has made a significant investment in enhancing the ability of our local authorities and Fire and Rescue Services to ensure their services are based on a deep understanding of the needs and aspirations of all their citizens.

Real progress is being made in the region on the collection and management of customer information and this is being used to improve customer contact services which include multiple communication channels, self-service options and increased numbers of contact points. Investment by the 21st Century Programme is enabling councils to consider how they can best utilise their rich reservoir of customer insight to design and improve services which best meet the needs of 21st century citizens.

Stockton Council is a leading example in the region, taking a whole-organisation approach to embedding customer excellence across all of its activities and investing in ensuring that customer insight is a valued part of the corporate culture.

Phase 1 projects have developed a number of valuable resources built on local research into customer insight and excellence and which are available to all stakeholders with an interest in ensuring that 21st Century Services provides the best possible support to 21st century citizens.

A summary of 21st Century Services projects and the resources developed to support customer excellence are detailed overleaf with further information available on our website at: www.northeastiep.gov.uk/21Century

The local authority sponsor is Ada Burns, Chief Executive of Darlington Borough Council

What are the major issues facing your council? What information do you need? How can the RIEP help you?

To get in touch about any of these issues, or if you'd like to know more about specific 21st Century Services projects, please email: riep@northeastcouncils.gov.uk. Look out for updates and events in our regular online Bulletins – sign up at www.northeastiep.gov.uk



Summary of 21st Century Services Programme Projects

Customer Insight

This project aims to enhance the ability of local authorities and Fire and Rescue Services to share their customer knowledge and learning, reduce duplication and improve customer experience and outcomes. The project identifies approaches to the analysis, interpretation and understanding of customer insight which contribute whole-organisation service and performance improvement.

Customer Service Excellence

This project aims to raise the overall level of customer excellence competency across the region's workforce by encouraging benchmarking against national excellence standards and investment in embedding customer excellence as a corporate priority.

Customer Insight and Customer Service Excellence Projects include:

- Defining Insight & Excellence
- Making the business case for Insight as a strategic business asset
- Mapping insight across the Region
- Embedding corporate customer excellence
- Resource directory on insight & excellence
- Good practice case studies from around the region

Customer Channels

The project's aim is to improve the overall standard of customers' access to services through a range of channels whilst also looking at other contributing factors. The project has delved into a number of areas including:

- Customer Access Strategies
- Channel Migration (including understanding cost to serve)
- National Indicator 14 – Reducing Avoidable Contact
- Customer Access Standards
- Good practice – nationally and regionally

Stage 2 will focus on developing:

- A cost to serve model
- Access Strategy development
- Regional Group concentrating on key themes based around customer service

Information Governance and Management

This project aims to ensure councils and their partners within Local Strategic Partnerships provide their customers and citizens with services designed and delivered around their needs - informed by good quality and timely information, shared appropriately.

21st Century Services is one of a range of programmes delivered by the North East Improvement & Efficiency Partnership which belongs to and includes the 12 North East councils, 4 Fire & Rescue Services and other key partners. Our programmes are able to flex and evolve to reflect the needs and challenges of the partner organisations – the projects listed here may therefore be subject to change.

Further information is available on our website at:
www.northeastiep.gov.uk or call us on 0191 261 3923