



# REGISTRATION

## Annual Report 2009/10 (Summary)



# **1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

## **1.1 Function and Purpose**

The Caerphilly Registration Service establishes a permanent legal record of every birth, death, marriage and civil partnership in the County Borough, authorises and conducts civil marriage and civil partnership ceremonies, administers the oath and pledge taken by new British Citizens.

Its main functions are:

- ❑ The registration of all births, deaths and still births occurring within the County Borough
- ❑ Conducting citizenship ceremonies for Caerphilly County Borough residents who make application for British Nationality.
- ❑ Safe custody of all historic records of births, deaths and marriages dating back to 1837 and issue of certified copies from these records on demand
- ❑ Taking notices of intended marriage and civil partnership from persons resident within the County Borough
- ❑ Conducting and registration of all civil marriages and civil partnerships taking place in any venue registered or licensed for the purpose
- ❑ Registering religious marriages where required
- ❑ Inspection and registration of new venues for marriage and civil partnership
- ❑ Giving assistance and advice to customers on all aspects of registration, citizenship and nationality
- ❑ Providing data for vital work on population statistics and medical research.

## **1.2 The Registration Service**

The Caerphilly Registration Service (CRS) is part of the Chief Executive's department and sits within Performance & Policy.

The Chief Executive acts as the statutory Proper Officer (PO) for Registration Matters.

The County Borough of Caerphilly comprises 1 registration district. There have been 3 scheme changes since its inception on local government organisation in 1996, the most recent taking place in November 2009 when new governance arrangements resulted in a move to 1 register to streamline administrative procedures within the district.

CRS has 6 buildings licensed for civil marriage and civil partnership, the latest – the New Cottage Dance Centre – being approved in early 2009.

CRS was providing naming, commitment and re-affirmation of vows ceremonies in partnership with Civil Ceremonies Ltd. since April 2003. This agreement ceased and the Service now provides ceremonies under other local authority arrangements.

CRS works closely with other registration districts throughout Wales, particularly South Wales, on training matters and leads on the provision of a regional training group with Newport and Monmouthshire offering an annual training programme to the All Wales Registration group and beyond.

## **1.3 Staff**

The Registration Service officers and administrators represent the service's most important resource. The professionalism and skill consistently shown by officers at all levels within the service means that our clients have a high satisfaction level across the range of services provided.

Registration Officers are accountable to the Registrar General for their acts and omissions under the terms of the Registration Acts. Individual principal registration officers retain personal statutory responsibility under the various registration service acts and regulations.

A consistent theme from the comments and letters received and response to surveys is the high standard of customer service provided by officers.

#### **1.4 Objectives**

The Registration Service is committed to providing customers with high quality registration services at key times in their lives, reflected in the facilities provided within register offices and the skill and dedication of staff.

#### **1.5 Customers**

The service is totally customer focused and the high standard of service delivery achieved reflects positively on the local authority.

In the provision of facilities to register births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships, the Registration Service is dealing with the public at key times of their lives. Registration Officers are aware that they are providing services to customers who are often in heightened emotional circumstances and so the values outlined below are paramount to the service's aims:

- ❑ To put people at the heart of what we do and to value their view. Listening to and involving our customers and being responsive to their needs
- ❑ To make the best use of resources, being innovative and creative and seeking continuous improvement
- ❑ To develop and support staff, cultivating enthusiasm and commitment and recognising achievement
- ❑ To work with others to improve the quality of service providing high quality services that give value for money and are based on best practice
- ❑ Developing and retaining highly skilled and valued staff that are empowered to deliver our goals.

#### **1.6 Births, Deaths and Still-births**

Birth, death and still-birth registration and declarations for other districts are provided at various times at the main district office of the registrars at Penallta House and may also be provided at 5 out-stations.

No service is provided at the main hospitals but a domiciliary service would be provided at any time in cases of hardship or difficulty in attending the register office or out-station.

In 2008/2009, a total of 599 births were registered or re-registered and an additional 1532 declarations were taken. As a total of all birth clients, 72% were declarations. In 2009/10, a total of 591 births were registered or re-registered and a further 1151 declarations taken. As a total of all birth clients, 66% were declarations. These declarations are taken for births occurring outside the Caerphilly registration district mainly at hospitals in Cardiff, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Monmouthshire and Vale of Glamorgan.

Caerphilly Miners Hospital, the main maternity unit for the district, has drastically reduced its facilities in recent years resulting in many mothers having to give birth outside the County Borough. This is likely to change when new facilities are provided at Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr in 2011.

Death registrations totalled 823 in 2008/2009 with only 7 declarations being taken. As a total of all death clients, less than 1% were declarations. In 2009/10, a total of 757 deaths were registered with only 7 declarations taken. Again less than 1% of all death clients were declarations.

There are only approximately 2 to 3 still-births registered or declarations taken annually.

Death informants are offered a booklet produced by the registration and bereavement service containing much information on bereavement after care services. This includes signposting to other facilities e.g. probate, counselling.

The RON web-based system for registering births and deaths is used at the main office at Penallta House. RON for Marriages was introduced in November 2009.

### **1.7 Marriages and Civil Partnerships**

The number of civil marriages taking place in the district have increased year on year following the inception of Caerphilly Registration Service in 1996 but have declined slightly in the last 2 years.

Civil Partnership Registration was introduced in December 2005. A survey carried out gave a very positive response to the level of service provided in the County Borough from those couples who had registered their civil partnerships or given notice in the County Borough.

The registration district has its own Ceremony Room decorated to a high standard at Penallta House, Ystrad Mynach.

There are 6 venues licensed for civil marriage and civil partnership in the district. These are:

- Caerphilly Castle
- Llancaiach Fawr, Nelson
- Llechwen Hall Hotel, Llanfabon
- Maes Manor Hotel, Blackwood
- Bryn Meadows Hotel, Maesycwmmmer
- New Cottage Dance Centre, Ystrad Mynach

Again, these have proved popular venues and the numbers of ceremonies taking place have increased year after year.

The ceremony room, Craig Penallta, was de-commissioned on 1 January 2010 and ceremonies are offered here and at the district register office at Penallta House during the week and until 4.30pm on Saturday throughout the year. Civil marriages and partnerships at Approved Premises are attended on all days.

	Register Office		Licensed venues		Craig Penallta		Registered buildings (religious)	Housebound/Detained, RG's Licence/Special Provisions	
	Marr.	CP	Marr.	CP	Marr.	CP		Marr.	CP
2004/5	389	N/A	52	N/A	N/A	N/A	14	1	N/A
2005/6	334	12	60	0	N/A	N/A	23	0	0
2006/7	331	15	90	2	N/A	N/A	17	0	1
2007/8	306	12	116	2	N/A	N/A	18	0	0
2008/9	268	4	128	3	N/A	N/A	13	0	0

2009/10	200	3	168	4	27	0	13	0	0

The table above shows the numbers of civil marriages and civil partnerships taking place at the Register Office and at licensed venues. It also shows the number of marriages taking place at registered buildings (religious marriages) and marriages and civil partnerships at other venues (housebound & detained, Registrar General's Licence/Special Provisions).

The overall number of civil ceremonies taking place has remained steady throughout at around 400-440 ceremonies every year. Licensed premise ceremonies show sustained growth whilst register office ceremonies have declined.

The decline in numbers of register office ceremonies was caused partly by the move from Ystrad Fawr to Penallta House. Numbers were limited through the period March to September 2008 as couples did not want to book a ceremony when they were unable to view the venue. Most ceremonies are booked up to a year in advance.

There has been a further decline in Register Office/Craig Penallta ceremonies in 2009/10. This may be that Craig Penallta, a modern rather than traditional building does not appeal to couples as much as Ystrad Fawr, but is more likely to be a result of the recession.

Currently, the fee for licensing premises for civil marriage and civil partnerships is a licensing section function and is not received as income to the Registration Service in Caerphilly. This is not the situation nationally.

Fees for attendance at outside marriages have been re-assessed and were increased on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 and will increase by approximately 3% annually. However, Caerphilly's fees are currently competitive and tend to the lower side of fees charged in the South Wales area.

In 2008/9 income from Register Office ceremonies was £10,920.00 and in 2009/10 income from Register Office/Craig Penallta ceremonies was £10,280.00. There was a drop in numbers of ceremonies from 272 to 230. In 2008/2009 income from Approved Venue ceremonies was £27,250.00 and in 2009/10 it was £39,455.00. Numbers rose from 131 to 172.

Income received from legal notices of marriage and civil partnership was £35,520.00 in 2008/9 and £36,630.00 in 2009/10. The statutory fee for entering notice has been increased for 2010/11 for the first time in 10 years.

## **1.8 Citizenship**

Citizenship Ceremonies take place at approximately 4 to 6 week intervals.

Caerphilly has now established an informal pattern of holding ceremonies and this seems to work well administratively. Those who have used the service have been very appreciative of the level of provision within the County Borough.

The Mayor, Leader and Chief Executive or Head of Service are all involved in the ceremonies along with the Lord Lieutenant and his deputies and again a very favourable response has been received.

Income from Citizenship rose from £2,240.00 in 2008/9 to £5,440.00 in 2009/10.

## **1.9 Other Services**

CRS introduced non-statutory ceremonies on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003. Naming, Re-affirmation of Vows and Commitment Ceremonies commenced in partnership with Civil Ceremonies Ltd. (CCL).

The arrangement with CCL has been terminated and the Registration Service provides all services directly. These services currently bring in around £1,100.00 income per annum.

It is recognised that the registration service is ideally placed to act as a focal point for information on a range of issues associated with births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships, for example pensions and benefits, probate advice, marriage/partnership preparation.

The transfer of responsibility to local authorities for the delivery of face-to-face registration services has aided the development of new 'sign-posting' services (Burials and Cemeteries) and Customer First (Customer Services) within the County Borough.

Any opportunities for cross service working between registration and other local authority services within the County Borough of Caerphilly and beyond, for example Customer First and Bereavement and Licensing Services, will continue to be considered whenever possible to ensure the best possible service to the public.

### **1.10 Registers and Certificates**

Deposited birth, death and marriage records for much (though not all due to many boundary changes over the years) of the County Borough of Caerphilly dating back to 1837 are held at the Register Office, Penallta House in secure storage facilities.

In 2005/2006 the issue of copy certificates from these records generated income of £30,500. In 2008/2009, income from certificate issue was £37,241 and in 2009/10, income from certificate issue and administrative fees totalled £40,412.00. The number of copy certificates issued increased significantly in the 5 year period between 2005 and 2009 but is now steadying. However, statutory fees have been increased for 2010/11, the first increase for a number of years.

The total income generated by the service in 2009/10 was £133,317, an increase of £20,146 on 2008/09 figures.

### **1.11 Performance Monitoring**

A Service Delivery Inspection in August 2008 gave Caerphilly the following assessment:

SERVICE DELIVERY AND CUSTOMER CARE	A
ORGANISATION AND TECHNICAL	A
GRO OVERALL ASSESSMENT	Excellent

Performance Standards in respect of certificate applications, incoming and outgoing post, corrections and re-registrations, waiting times are monitored and reported via a Performance Information Measurement System (FFYNNON). These are updated monthly or quarterly.

RON management systems will also provide information to monitor the registration of events within statutory timescales

Customer satisfaction will continue to be monitored by using feedback forms and regular surveys and we will publish results on the waiting area screens and also on our website.

The service intends pursuing the opportunity to offer the Nationality Checking Service that will further enable us to develop a relationship with citizenship applicants prior to the application being submitted to the Home Office.

Citizenship ceremonies, which are now an essential element of the acquisition of British nationality, help new citizens to celebrate their new status and enable representatives of the community and the Council to welcome citizens into the County Borough.

We intend further developing the welcome packs issued to all new citizens to include information on environmental sustainability and any other relevant issues within the Council's policy agenda.