

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL
REGULATION AND ENFORCEMENT

REGISTER OFFICE
SERVICE PLAN 2016/2017

4. Introduction to the Service and the Service Plan

4.1 Statutory requirements

The Registration Service Act 1953 requires every local authority to provide a Registration Service. The service is a statutory service and local authorities in general are obliged by law to provide accommodation and staffing to enable the registration of all civil events within a statutory time frame. Such events include the registration of births, deaths, stillbirths, marriages and civil partnerships, the provision of a certificate service and the provision of Citizenship Ceremonies. Various other Acts, such as the Marriage Act 1949 and the Birth and Death Registration Act 1953, place a statutory requirement on the public to register such events.

Although the Registration Service is regulated by the Registrar General, whose office is part of the Identity and Passport Service, the local and legal responsibility for the provision of the Service is given to a senior council officer called the Proper Officer for Registration Matters. The Proper Officer for Birmingham City Council is Jacqui Kennedy, Acting Strategic Director of Regulation and Enforcement.

4.2 The Core Statutory Elements of the Service are to:

- Register all births occurring within Birmingham within 42 days.
- Register all deaths occurring within Birmingham within 5 days.
- Attest declarations for births and deaths occurring outside Birmingham.
- Provide and certify copies of all registrations to the Registrar General.
- Provide a service as a Designated Register Office for persons who are subject to Immigration Control and who may or may not be Birmingham citizens.
- Undertake the legal preliminaries to marriage and civil partnership.
- Provide certificates of birth, death, marriage and civil partnership.
- Attend, provide a ceremony for and register civil marriages and civil partnerships at the Register Office.
- Attend and register marriages and civil partnerships taking place at registered buildings.
- Assist in the registration of places of worship.
- Attend, provide a ceremony for and register civil marriages and civil partnerships at approved premises.
- Assist in the certification of registered buildings as a place for the solemnization of marriages.
- Make statutory payments to authorised persons for making returns of marriage ceremonies in religious buildings.
- Arrange and provide citizenship ceremonies.
- Assist the public with corrections to registrations.
- Re-register births in accordance with the Registration Acts.
- Provide statistical information to the Registrar General and Birmingham City Council.

- Ensure the security, maintenance and restoration of registers and indexes.
- Arrange for the approval of buildings to be used as venues for civil marriage and civil partnership ceremonies.
- Arrange for the approval of religious buildings to be used as venues for the registration of civil partnership.
- Provide a conversion procedure for Civil Partners
- Report Sham marriages to the Home Office (UKVI) and fraudulent applications for certificates to the Registrar General.

4.3 **Non-statutory services provided**

The Service provides a range of non-statutory services as set out below:

- Civil ceremonies, for example baby naming and renewal of vows.
- Nationality Checking Service.
- Settlement Checking Service.
- Provision of advice, searches and copy certificates for use in genealogical research.
- Provision of advice on name changes, bereavement procedures, Tell Us Once.
- Provision of an Emergency Bereavement Service outside normal office hours e.g. at weekends and bank holidays including short notice death registration and out of England removal orders.

4.4 The legislation that regulates the Registration Service is listed below:

The Registration of Births Deaths and Still Births

- Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953
- Population (Statistics) Act 1960
- The Registration Service Act 2007
- Registration of Births and Deaths Regulations 1987
- Marriage (Registrar General's Licence) Act 1970
- Legitimacy Act 1976
- The Deregulation (Still-Birth and Death Registration) Order 1996
- The Contracting Out (functions of the Registrar General in relation to authoring re-registration of births) Order 1997.
- The Deregulation (Correction of Birth and Death Entries in Registers of Other Records) Order 2002
- The Registration of Births and Deaths (Electronic Communications and Electronic Storage) Order 2006
- Legitimacy Act 1976
- Adoptions and Children's Act 2002
- The Adopted Children and Adoption Contact Register Regulations 2005
- The Adoption Information and Intermediary Services (Pre-commencement) Adoptions Regulations
- Gender Recognition Act 2004

- The Gender Recognition Register Regulations 2005
- The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Regulations 1968
- The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Amendment) Regulations 2007
- The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Amendment) No 2 Regulations 2007
- Perjury Act 1911
- The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Amendment) Regulations 2005
- The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Amendment) Regulations 2007
- Family Law Reform Act 1987
- Guardianship of Minors Act 1971
- Affiliation Proceeding Act 1957
- Statutory Declaration Act 1836
- Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990
- Human Fertilisation and Embryology (Deceased Fathers) Act 2003
- Baptismal Registers Measure 1961
- National Health Service Act 2006
- Education Act 1996
- Population (Statistics) Act 1938 and 1960
- The Anglo Spanish Consular Convention 1963

Marriages and Civil Partnerships

- Marriage Act 1949
- The Marriage Act 1976
- The Marriage Act 1983
- Perjury Act 1911
- The Marriage (Prohibited Degrees of Relationship) Act 1986
- The Marriage Act 1994
- The Registration Service Act 2007
- The Registration of Marriages Regulations 1986
- The Marriage Act 1994 (Approved Premises)
- The Registrar General's Act 1970
- The Reporting of Suspicious Marriages and Registration of Marriages (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2000
- The Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants) Act 2004
- The Immigration (Procedure for Marriage) Regulations 2005
- The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Fees) Order 2002
- Marriage Act 1983 (Housebound and detained persons)
- Marriage (Registrar General's Licence) Act 1970.
- Marriage (Scotland) Act 1956 as amended by the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977
- Marriage (Ireland) Act 1846
- Marriage of British (Facilities) Acts 1915 and 1916
- Marriage with Foreigners Act 1906
- Marriage with foreigners Act 1892-1988

- The Foreign Marriage Order 1970
- Places of Worship Registration Act 1855
- The Civil Partnership Act 2004
- Civil Partnership Act 2005
- The Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005
- The Reporting of Suspicious Civil Partnerships Regulations 2005
- The Civil Partnership (Registration Provisions) Regulations 2005
- The Immigration (Procedure for Formation of Civil Partnerships) Regulations 2005
- The Registration of Civil Partnerships (Fees) (No. 2) Order 2005
- The Marriages Act (Same Sex Couples) 2013
- The Immigration Act 2014

Registration Service and Certificates

- Marriage Act 1949
- Birth and Deaths Registration Act 1953
- Civil Partnership Act 2004
- Civil Partnership Act 2005
- The Registration Service Act 2007
- Legitimacy Act 1976
- Gender Recognition Act 2004
- Places of Worship Registration Act 1855
- The Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005
- The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Fees) Order 2002
- Baptismal Registers Measure 1966.

4.5 **Service Plan**

This Service Plan details the work undertaken by the service, both in terms of quantity and quality, how this contributes to, and supports, the high level intended outcomes of the City; customer feedback; intended improvements; financial, people, IT and accommodation resources; and details what service will be provided.

4.6 **Planned Service Improvements in 2016/2017 and beyond**

- To provide enhanced marriage ceremonies.
- To work towards the Service becoming financially self- sufficient by the introduction of income generation schemes.
- To review methods of consulting with service users with a view to driving change.
- To make increasingly effective use of the service's Stopford electronic diary system by offering an online birth registration appointment facility and to work towards provision of online death registration appointments.

- To continue to review processes and introduce electronic systems to make them more efficient.
- To extend electronic payment facilities to speed up processes and improve the customer journey.
- To introduce a suite of promotional tools to market the services offered.
- To introduce customer care guidelines together with a dress code
- Introduction of enhancements to ceremony rooms and ceremonial courtyard.
- Holding of Wedding Fayre
- Continue to lobby ministers and the Registrar General with the aim of achieving a fair and relevant financial support model for the local registration service.
- Partnership working with hospitals and GP's to improve the quality of death certificates issued by doctor's in order to decrease the return of incorrect certificates, speed up death registration and improve communication channels.
- Implementation of a full registration service on a Saturday
- Recruitment into key vacant posts
- Consideration of extending the number of registration appointments available during the normal working week.

4.7 **Current Organisational Assessment**

The intensive workload, of the Register Office, has continued to provide the driver to make further improvements to processes and procedures. Various processes and procedures have been reviewed over the past year and improvements implemented to make the processes leaner. The main improvements include the further employment of the Stopford electronic diary system. The purchase of this system has assisted in several service areas and there are other facilities which will provide future benefits to customer and staff alike

In working towards the service area becoming self sufficient various initiatives have been introduced which include upfront payments for notices of marriage and income generation schemes.

The service has successfully implemented various changes in Marriage/Civil Partnership legislation ie The Immigration Act and Conversion of Civil Partnerships to Marriage.

Service managers have strengthened partnership working with family support organisations and faith advocacy groups in order to assist service users.

The Emergency Bereavement out of hours service has been enhanced by the inclusion of out of England removal orders.

The provision of death registration appointments has been revised to increase the availability of urgent appointments and a new bespoke electronic index system was introduced.

There are now three different E contact forms placed on the Register Office web pages and dedicated mailboxes for each individual service area. This meets with the channel shift priority of the City Council.

The Stopford web page based application for facilitating birth registration appointments will be implemented in March. The employment of this particular function should reduce the volume of customer phone calls to the Registration service area reception desk and is in keeping with the City Council's priority of channel shift.

Service managers have looked at alternative ways of resourcing the Register Office for example they have worked with the DWP and offer work experience placements.

Sickness absence levels have continued to be high and service managers have been proactive in managing sickness absence.

4.8 **Key Performance Indicators**

The Key Performance Indicators for the local registration service, are set nationally.

They are as follows:

- 98% of all births registered within 42 days.
- 98% of all stillbirths registered within 42 days.
- 95% of all deaths registered within 5 days of occurrence.
- 95% of appointments made to register births are within 5 working days of the request.
- 95% of appointments made to register deaths are within 2 working days of the request.
- To see 95% of all customers, who have an appointment, within 10 minutes of their appointed time.
- To see 95% of other customers i.e. those without an appointment, within 30 minutes of their arrival.
- 95% of all applications for certificates dealt with within 5 working days from receipt of application.
- 92.5% of customers surveyed expressing satisfaction with the service.
- Total number of complaints not to exceed 0.3% of all registrations.
- To provide all new citizens with a Citizenship Ceremony with 3 months of being notified that their application to become a British Citizen has been successful.

4.9 National Returns

A local Registration Service is required by law to make annual and quarterly returns to the General Register Office.

An annual report is also required about performance and achievement this report is made to the Registrar General after the end of the financial year.

4.10 Performance Indicators

The Registration Service reports on a series of nationally agreed key performance indicators. The outcomes for the last and previous years are shown below.

Type of Indicator	Indicator	Performance	
National Good Practice Guide Indicators	% of births registered within 42 days of birth	2012	94%
		2013	95%
		2014	89%
		2015	87%
	% of deaths (excluding post mortem and inquest cases) registered within 5 days of occurrence	2012	83%
		2013	75%
		2014	75%
		2015	65%
	% of applicants for certificates dealt with in 5 working days from receipt of application	2012	100%
		2013	100%
2014		100%	
2015		100%	
% of appointments for birth registrations that are within 5 working days of the request	2012	Not recorded Sept – Dec 33.5%	
	2013		
	2014	36%	
	2015	43%	
% of appointments for death registrations that are within 2 working days of the request	2012	Not recorded Sept – Dec 97.5%	
	2013		
	2014	97%	
	2015	94%	

Type of Indicator	Indicator	Performance	
	% of customers, who have an appointment, who are seen early, on time or within 10 minutes of their appointment time	2012	99%
		2013	98%
		2014	94%
		2015	93%
		2014	81%
Regulation and Enforcement Local Indicators – customer satisfaction	We will respond to correspondence within 5 days	2012	100%
		2013	100%
		2014	100%
		2015	100%
Registration Service Local Indicators – speed of dealing with customer requests	To issue copy certificates within one hour to customers attending the office	2012	100%
		2013	100%
		2014	100%
	To issue copy certificates within two working days to customers applying by post or online.	2012	100%
		2013	100%
		2014	100%
		2015	100%

4.11 Quantity of work

Year	Number of Certificates issued	Number of Births registered	Number of Deaths Registered	Number of marriages at Register Office
2015	130,464	22,708	10,172	1,315
2014	132,785	23,791	10,160	1,637
2013	134,628	23,636	10,001	1,749
2012	132,000	25,175	9,726	1,808
2011	125,353	22,422	9,481	1,556
2010	103,687	20,880	9,738	1,556

Year	Number attending citizenship ceremonies	Number of search room post and e mail applications	Number of search room personal applicants	Total Primary Customers attending the Register Office
2015	2,076	14,882	11,551	66,516
2014	3,332	15,984	16,088	73,816
2013	5,534	15,718	15,718	84,861
2012	4,977	13,981	17,093	84,565
2011	5,418	14,060	20,056	72,449

4.12 Customer Research

As Birmingham is one of the Designated Register Offices and registers births and deaths for non-Birmingham residents not all service users are council taxpaying citizens of Birmingham. A large part of the number of births registered and deaths registered are for residents living in other authorities.

Applicants for certificates are from all over the world. There is also a growing number of customers who live around the world and who contact us to marry in Birmingham or ask about marrying in the UK in general.

In order to gauge how the customer views our service to them we have traditionally provided three separate customer satisfaction questionnaires which relate to the service received in the three main service areas of Ceremonies, Certificates and Registration. The service provided the questionnaires through a paper format, an electronic format and the use of the internet based SurveyMonkey. As the responses to the surveys were low in 2014 a more effective means of consultation is currently being considered.

We react to customer feedback when comments or suggestions are made which will improve future service provision.

4.13 Needs of Stakeholders

The Service is continually seeking ways to improve the service provided to service users. There are now regular meetings with Her Majesty's Coroner for Birmingham and Solihull and managers now attend stakeholder meetings with Funeral Directors. In addition meetings of the Faith Advocacy Group are also held regularly to assist several community groups with their particular needs, both cultural and religious, around the time of bereavement.

4.14 Likely Future Developments

The Service continues to face a number of challenges. Following the City Council 2016 Service Review, the Registration Service is not required to make any additional savings but has been advised that it must become self-sufficient by 2018. It has been given a challenging income target for 2015/16, which it has not been in a position to achieve. The service is driven by customer demand. The number of marriages in 2015 has again decreased as have the number of new citizens. The latter has decreased by 1,256 citizens since 2013. This, in itself, has meant a drop in income of £100,480. In addition the service is restricted in the ways in which it can generate income in that the majority of fees are statutory and do not reflect the cost of delivery. The fees for use of the ceremony rooms are benchmarked against neighbouring districts. The Tell Us Once Government initiative has reduced the need for additional certificates traditionally a means of generating income. The Passport Agency viewing documents provided by the General Register Office (GRO) and the Deregulation Act 2015, which allows GRO only to provide

cheaper copies of events rather than certificates from local offices has also damaged this potential income generation stream.

There have been some initiatives which have gone some way to mitigate the budget pressure ie staffing levels have been reduced and some posts held vacant, however this has impacted on the ability of the service to meet the nationally agreed KPIs timeliness registration targets. It should be noted that failure to provide some duties is an offence.

There are however plans to introduce services and products and to apply charges which are not governed by statute. It is anticipated that an appropriately targeted promotions campaign over time will yield significant income. It is however uncertain if this will be sufficient to satisfy the income surplus allocated to the service.

4.15 Potential for Services to be provided by outside organisations

The Registration Service is a statutory function governed by the Registrar General and is not open to provision by outside organisations or competition from outside the council. The law requires the service to be provided by local authorities even though it is a national requirement,

4.16 Service Delivery

The service will continue to provide excellent services including the following:

- Registration Services for the Citizens of Birmingham and beyond, as required out in legislation.
- The reporting of sham marriages and fraudulent applications for certificates.
- The forwarding of any submitted foreign divorces accepted at the time of giving notice of marriage or civil partnership, to the Registrar General, within two working days of receipt.
- All requests for corrections requiring the authority of the Registrar General, will be forwarded to the General Register Office, within two working days of receipt from the customer.
- All correspondence will be answered, where possible, within 48 hours.
- The treatment of customers will be carried out in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Birmingham Promise and the Service Area's Customer Care guidelines.

4.17 The service clearly and directly supports the **City's Community Strategic Outcomes**

The table below details the service provision for the year and links it to outcome measures and refers to the City Council's Strategic Outcomes:

Service Provision	Outcome	Measure	Target	Contribution to Strategic Outcome and Priorities
To be available to Register births and deaths within statutory time limits	To provide an efficient and timely Registration service for our customers	Customer Satisfaction with the overall quality of our services Waiting times	92.5% 93% of customers within 10 minutes with appointment	Enjoy a high quality of life through ability to prove legal status and identity Achieving Excellence
To offer all customers an appointment and see drop in customers on the day	To provide an efficient and timely Registration service for our customers	Customer Satisfaction with the overall quality of our services Ability to make an appointment % of appointments for registration of births within 42 working days of request % of appointments for registration of deaths within 2 working days of request	92.5% 2015 % 87% 2015 % 94%	Enjoy a high quality of life Achieving Excellence

Service Provision	Outcome	Measure	Target	Contribution to Strategic Outcome and Priorities
To provide an effective Nationality Checking service	To provide an efficient service for our customers	Customer Satisfaction with the overall quality of our services	80%	Enjoy a high quality of life Achieving Excellence
To respond to all written applications for certificates within two working days	To provide an efficient and responsive Registration service for our customers	Customer Satisfaction with the overall quality of our services	90% 2015 % 93 %	Enjoy a high quality of life Achieving Excellence

4.18 Financial and Resource Planning Management

The savings plan, submitted to the council, detailed how these savings would be made in terms of vacancy management. It meant the loss of the Genealogist post and a senior management post. However, there are still income targets which have been imposed on the service, the Lord Mayor's Citizenship Ceremony income target, and others which cannot be reached due to a drop in custom/demand.

The service employs 72 FTEs together with 12 peripatetic staff and 12 weekend only staff. The peripatetic staff attends ceremonies at Approved Premises and Citizenship Ceremonies. The weekend only staff provides ceremonies and registrations at the Register Office and registered religious buildings at weekends as well as the out of hours Emergency Bereavement Service.

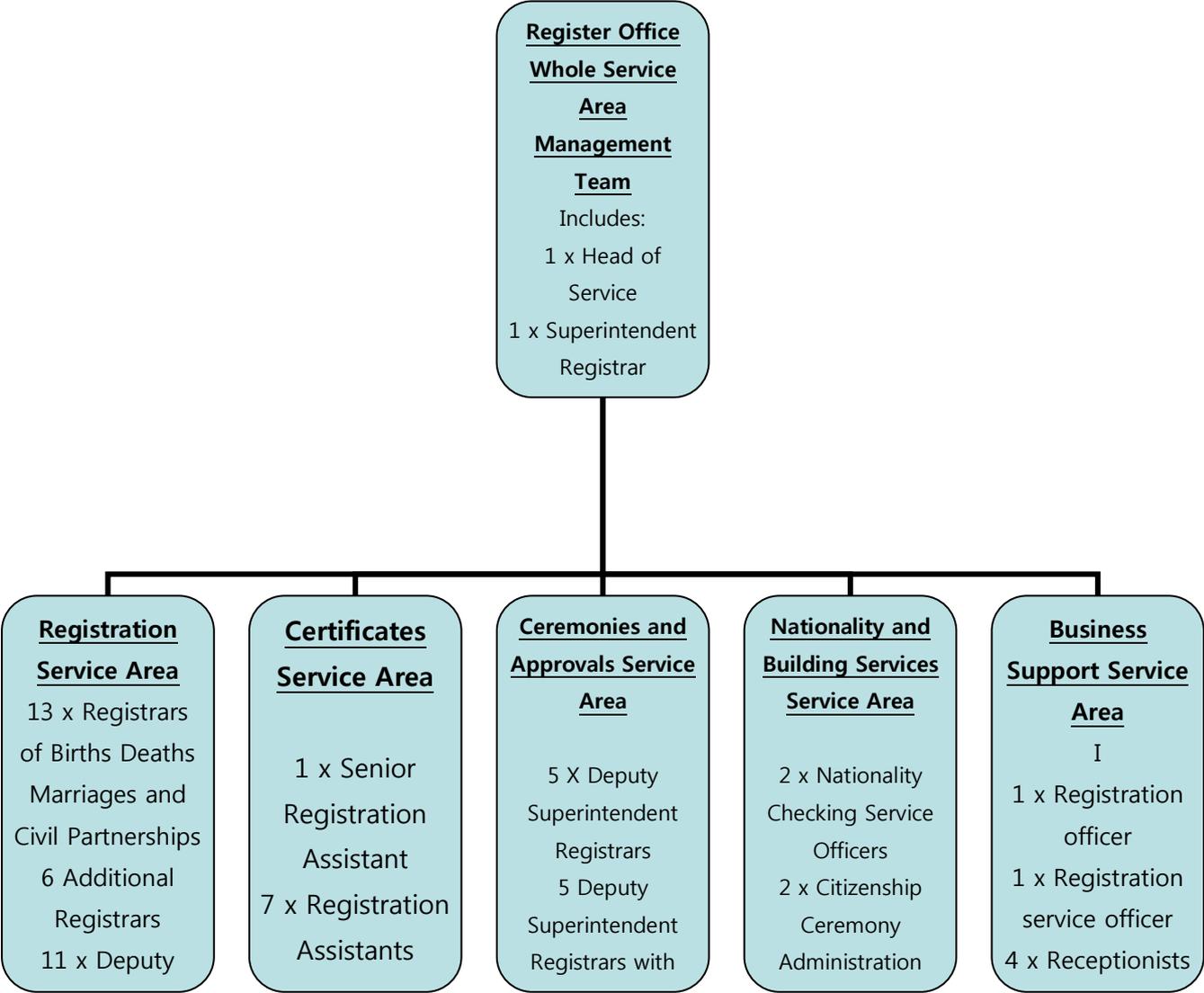
Whilst the majority of fees are set nationally by the Registrar General some non-statutory fees are set by the City Council through the Licensing and Public Protection Committee. There have been comments, by elected members, about the burden placed on the council tax payer of Birmingham in supporting a registration service for non-Birmingham residents. Following these comments lobbying of local MPs has taken place and discussions with the Deputy Registrar general about the unfair burden. It has also been suggested that many central government agencies use the local registration service as a source of information and data as well as a free service. For example, the DWP use the local registration service to provide the Tell Us Once system and the Office for National Statistics uses the statistics from birth and death registrations freely. It has been further suggested that central government should financially support such a vital, valuable and necessary

service rather than hope that someone buys a certificate of gets married to provide an inadequate fee. Service managers continue to lobby the GRO and there is currently a review of statutory fees being undertaken by the GRO.

4.19 The current staffing structure is attached as Appendix 4A.

4.20 The statutory fees charged by the service appears in Appendix 4B.

REGISTER OFFICE ORGANISATION STRUCTURE



STATUTORY REGISTER OFFICE FEES

Title of Fee	Amount	Comments
Superintendent Registrar's Certificate of Birth, Death, Marriage or Civil Partnership	£10.00	Fee payable to BCC
Registrar's Certificate issued within 15 days of Registration	£4.00	Fee payable to BCC
Registrar's Certificate issued from 15 days after Registration	£7.00	Fee payable to BCC
A general search in indexes not exceeding 6 hours	£18.00	Fee payable to BCC
Certificate of Worship	£29.00	Fee payable to BCC
Registration of a religious building for marriage	£123.00	Fee payable to BCC
Registration of a religious building for marriages for same sex couples(That is already registered)	£64.00	Fee payable to BCC
Notice of Marriage	£35.00	Fee payable to BCC
Notice of Marriage subject to Immigration Act	£47.00	Fee payable to BCC
Notice of Civil Partnership	£35.00	Fee payable to BCC
Notice of Civil Partnership subject to Immigration Act	£47.00	Fee payable to BCC
Fee payable to Registrar for marriage ceremony at Register Office	£46.00	Fee payable to BCC
Fee payable to Registrar for marriage ceremony at registered building	£86.00	Fee payable to BCC
Attendance of Civil Partnership Registrar	£46.00	Fee payable to BCC
Fee for General Search	£18.00	Fee payable to BCC
Notice given at Housebound Person's abode SR attendance	£47.00	Fee payable to BCC
Notice given at Detained Person's abode SR attendance	£68.00	Fee payable to BCC
Attendance of Registrar at Housebound Person's Marriage	£81.00	Fee payable to BCC
Attendance of Register at Detained Person's Marriage	£88.00	Fee payable to BCC
Attendance of Superintendent Registrar at Housebound Person's Marriage	£84.00	Fee payable to BCC
Attendance of C P Superintendent Registrar at Detained Person's Marriage	£94.00	Fee payable to BCC
Attendance of CP Registrar at Housebound Person's Civil Partnership	£81.00	Fee payable to BCC
Attendance of Registrar at Detained Person's Civil Partnership	£88.00	Fee payable to BCC
Registrar General's Licence for Marriage	£15.00	Not payable to BCC
Registrar General's Licence for Civil Partnership	£15.00	Not payable to BCC
Standard Conversion Civil Partnership to Marriage	£45.00	Fee payable to BCC
Fee for the Registration of a Birth	Nil	Free at point of service
Two stage procedure stage 1 conversion civil partnership to marriage	£27.00	Fee payable to BCC
SR attendance Conversion Civil partnership to marriage according to Jew/Society of Friends	£91.00	Fee payable to BCC
SR attendance Conversion Civil partnership to marriage Housebound	£99.00	Fee payable to BCC
SR attendance Conversion Civil partnership to marriage detained	£117.00	Fee payable to BCC

Fee for the Registration of a Death	Nil	Free at point of service
Fee for the Registration of a Stillbirth	Nil	Free at point of service
Fee received for each adult new citizen	£80.00	Fee payable to BCC
Fee received for each minor new citizen	£0.00	Fee payable to BCC
CP certificate issued at time of registration	£4.00	Fee payable to BCC
CP certificate issued 15 days-6months after registration	£7.00	Fee payable to BCC
CP certificate issued more than 6 months after registration	£10.00	Fee payable to BCC