

Customer Service Professional Journey to Excellence



December 2010

AND THE WINNERS ARE...

A trio of Scottish local government employees honoured at the 2010 Customer Service Professional Qualification Awards have spoken about the transformational impact it has had on service delivery within their councils.

Held as part of the annual SPDS (Society of Personnel Directors Scotland) conference at St Andrews on Wednesday, November 3, Pat Watters, President of COSLA, presented the awards to the following winners:

CANDIDATE OF THE YEAR – JANET FARRELL (East Lothian Council)

Janet was honoured after achieving passes at Award and Certificate level during a remarkably quick 10-month period.

"The Qualification has had an unbelievable impact on my working life and I'm so glad I went through the process," said Janet. "It has a knock-on effect for the whole council and improves customer service across the board."

LEARNING COACH OF THE YEAR – VERONICA AULD (East Lothian Council)

Veronica impressed judges with her learner-centred approach and support

for candidates.

"I value the Qualification highly and I can see the benefits of it every day," said Veronica. "I've noticed a huge change in some staff members and that



shows how much of an impact the Qualification has made.

CHAMPION OF THE YEAR – JULIE CANDLER (Dumfries & Galloway Council)

Julie was a worthy Champion thanks to her passion, commitment and determination to promote the Qualification.

"The benefit of the Qualification is enormous as all line managers commented on how staff members had grown in confidence since undertaking

the qualification," said Julie. "I look forward to seeing more staff getting the opportunity to study for this Qualification."

Councillor Watters praised the winners for their achievements and ongoing commitment to improving customer service in Scottish local government.

"These awards are in recognition of the winners' commitment and highlight the incredible impact of the Qualification in a short space of time," said Councillor Watters.

"We are entering a challenging period in Scottish local government history, but groundbreaking initiatives like the Qualification can help us through this difficult time by transforming the standard of customer service."

The team leading the Qualification would like to congratulate the winners and thank the SPDS Executive Group for hosting the awards ceremony, especially office bearers Hugh Mackenzie and Karen Algie.

COSLA colleagues Joe Di Paola and Tom Young were also integral to the success of the ceremony and are thanked for their continued backing and support of the COSLA-endorsed Qualification.

Qualification Comes With Value-Added Guarantee

THE ever-increasing value, credibility and status of the pioneering Customer Service Professional Qualification has been boosted following two significant recent developments.

Firstly, the Qualification received another prestigious endorsement when it was credit rated for the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) – a pivotal development for the career opportunities of candidates and graduates.

Secondly, potential candidates and centres now have the option of utilising Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) to undertake the Qualification. Renfrewshire Council, who provide the central administration for the Qualification, are now registered with Learn Direct Scotland as an approved learning provider, with Customer Service Professional registered on their Qualification database.

By providing more first-time resolutions of customer enquiries and increasing satisfaction of service users, the Qualification is already helping to transform customer service across Scotland.

These new developments further enhance the credibility and value of the Qualification, illustrating the exciting opportunities it continues to provide for councils and candidates.

The Qualification's Award level has been credit rated by SQA at SCQF level 5, with 9 SCQF Credit Points. The Certificate level has been credit rated by SQA at SCQF level 6, with 9 SCQF Credit Points.

In terms of the career progression of Qualification candidates and graduates, securing this credit rating is a hugely significant development as SCQF credit points can, in some instances, be transferred to other learning programmes.

This Credit Transfer helps to avoid duplication of learning for candidates and is yet another fantastic asset for the Qualification, which continues to evolve and produce hundreds of graduates across Scotland.

The SCQF helps employers, learners and the public understand the full range of Scottish qualifications, bringing together Standard Grades, Highers, SVQs, HNC/Ds, Degrees, and others.

The Framework shows how qualifications relate to each other and to other forms of learning, and how different types of qualification can contribute to improving the skills of the workforce.

Meanwhile, potential candidates wishing to utilise ILAs should discuss this with their organisation in the first instance and then apply directly to Learn Direct Scotland for an ILA application pack.

Visit www.ilascotland.org.uk for more details or freephone 0808 100 1090.

Price Increase

SINCE the Qualification's launch in 2008, every effort has been made to limit the costs incurred by delivery centres across Scotland.

Increased costs levied by SQA and other service providers have been absorbed, while recent developments have been introduced at no extra charge.

This has enabled course registration fees at Award and Certificate levels to remain static over the last two years.

However, as part of the ongoing commitment to improving the Qualification, a slight price increase will take effect from January 1, 2011.

The Award's course registration fees will now be £150, while the Certificate will be £175.

Current registration fees will, however, apply up to January 31, 2011, for centres booking induction events by December 31, 2010 and providing commitments on specific candidate registrations.

TEST DATE REMINDER

As part of the Qualification's ongoing quality assurance commitments, colleagues from the Central Administration Point (Renfrewshire Council) will periodically visit centres during induction and/or tests.

Would all Centres therefore please remember to advise the CAP as early as possible of any newly-arranged inductions or test dates?

Please notify the Central Administration Point on 0141 840 3466 or by email enquiries@customerserviceprofessional.co.uk

Features

- Light-touch to administer and deliver
- Portable across Scottish local government and beyond
- Single candidate management and registration point
- Ease of access
- Flexible to meet staff and organisational needs

GOODBYE BUT NOT FAREWELL!

Many of you will know Iain Sloan, the Qualification's Business Development Manager, seconded from the City of Edinburgh Council.

Having been heavily involved in the development, both from the outset and subsequent roll out, Iain has played a pivotal role in the Qualification's success.

In his current role, Iain has helped extend the Qualification's footprint through new delivery centres, more candidate registrations and raising its profile.

In early January 2011, Iain will be returning to his substantive post with City of Edinburgh Council to take on a new challenge.

We are grateful to Iain for his achievements, personable nature and his clear passion for the Qualification. Everyone involved with Customer Service Professional recognises and appreciates Iain's contribution and we take this opportunity to wish him well.

A PROFESSIONAL OUTLOOK

A phenomenal year for the Qualification will finish on the perfect note with the launch of the Professional Development Award (PDA), the third and final level of the Qualification.

In common with the existing Award and Certificate levels, the PDA level will come with SQA certification and deliver all the benefits that SQA's badging offers. It has been rated at SCQF Level 8.

This exciting development represents a fitting end to an incredible year of achievements for the Qualification, which is now being delivered by 25 centres across Scotland and boasts 125 graduates just two years after its inception.

A recent independent evaluation study showed that the Qualification is helping to transform customer service across Scotland and leaving a lasting legacy on staff, customers and councils.

The Qualification's credibility and value will now increase even further in 2011 through the introduction of the PDA.



TEAMWORK PAYS DIVIDENDS

DELEGATES from across Scotland teamed up at the inaugural Good Practice Cluster Event to help develop an Action Plan to strengthen and improve the nationwide delivery of the Qualification.

The event was designed to benefit current delivery centres and allowed delegates to share, discuss and debate local experiences and approaches from a range of perspectives and roles.

A comprehensive Action Plan has emerged from the event and serves as a focus to further improve the delivery of support and guidance to learning centres and all those involved in the Qualification.

Facilitated by Jane O'Donnell of the Improvement Service, 19 of the 25 organisations currently offering the Qualification were represented at the event, which was held in November in Edinburgh.

Those present included Learning Coaches, Local Co-ordinators,

Invigilators and a number of champions who have promoted the Qualification at a local level.

Barriers to rolling out, supporting, promoting and delivering the Qualification locally were identified and solutions were put forward to overcome them.

Good practice and innovation from various delivery centres was also highlighted and support networks were developed to benefit delivery of the Qualification - now and in the future.

Topics explored on the day included:

- Helping learners select the right course.
- Motivating and supporting learners through the process.
- Using blended learning approaches to support learners.
- Assessing when learners are test-ready.

- Identifying and choosing the right people for the right roles e.g. Learning Coach, Invigilator, Local Co-ordinator and champion.
- Raising and maintaining the Qualification's profile throughout centres.

The Action Plan has been structured around three themes - Supporting Candidates, Supporting Coaches and Supporting Delivery Centres & Local Co-ordinators - and has already been distributed. It is also available on the Community of Practice Website.



Season's Greetings

At this time of year, many services see a drop in the volume of customer contact. This can allow candidates extra time to work towards graduation.

Also, Learning Coaches and Local Coordinators can spend this time supporting colleagues, reviewing workbooks, or promoting the Qualification locally.

For candidates motivated by achieving goals, try making a New Year's Resolution to complete the Qualification (or a particular unit) by a certain date?

On behalf of everyone involved with the Qualification, we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Bottom Line Benefits

- £750,000 council savings in developing and delivering the Qualification
- Faster, more efficient customer service
- Instant feedback and results for candidates sitting exams



QUALIFICATION RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION

The Qualification's leading role in improving customer service across Scotland has been recognised by success at two prestigious national award ceremonies.

Michael Moran, Renfrewshire Council's Senior Organisational Development Adviser and a driving force behind the Qualification, was named Training Manager of the Year at the HR Network Scotland National Awards in November.



That honour followed on from the Qualification receiving a 'Highly Commended' award in the Lifelong Learning (Centres) category at the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) STAR Awards.

The HR Network awards recognise, acknowledge and reward the very best performers working within Human Resources across Scotland. Judges recognised Michael's broad remit within Renfrewshire and noted "the drive Michael has provided in leading the development and success of the Customer Service Professional Qualification".

Michael beat off stiff competition from the private and public sectors to land the award. He said: "I was delighted both personally and on behalf of the colleagues whom I work alongside, including through the Customer Service Professional Qualification.

"It is a clear indication that the work we are doing to increase development opportunities, and drive improvement in customer service delivery within councils, is the right thing. It is great to see the

efforts we have all put in over the past few years being recognised in such a positive way."

The SQA STAR Awards celebrate the success and commitment demonstrated by individuals, schools, colleges, training providers and businesses.



There are several thousand SQA Centres across Scotland and the Qualification was named in the top three for the second time in three years, which represents a remarkable achievement.

Dr Janet Brown, SQA Chief Executive, said: "Scottish education and training is full of inspirational stories and magnificent achievements from students and centres."

Meanwhile, the Qualification has been selected for the long leet for this year's COSLA Excellence Awards under the 'Securing a Workforce for the Future' category. The long leeted applications have now been forwarded to the judging panel, and their short leet of the top 3 applications from each category will be announced in January 2011.

Congratulations also go to the Qualification's IT delivery partner, eCom Scotland, who were recent finalists in the Fife Business Awards, under the Best Performing Small Business category.

The judges were particularly impressed with their 'Growth through Channel Partnership' strategy. This is another indication of the quality of those involved in the delivery of the Qualification.

RECENT GRADUATES

City of Edinburgh Council:

Graeme Nisbet (A)
David Easton (A)
Michelle Burnett (A)

East Ayrshire Council:

Christine Forrest (A)
Moyra Young Campbell (A)
Pauline Paton (A)

East Lothian Council:

Sarah Law (A) Pauline Casey (C)
Gillian Tracey (A) Lisa Shaw (A)
Sharon Fergusson (A)

East Renfrewshire Council:

Stuart Hendry (A)
Barbara Manson (A)
Jennifer McMaster (A)
Kim Galbraith (A)
Linda Causer (C)
May Donlin (C)

North Ayrshire Council:

Kevin Barr (C) Nicole Reid (A)

North Lanarkshire Council:

Elaine Craig (A)
Andrew Whitters (A)
Gillian Perkins (A)
Sandra Middleton (A)
Adele Anderson (A)
Eleanor Todd (A)
Jane McAdam (A)
Lesley Carson (A)

Perth & Kinross Council:

Louise Scobie (C)

Renfrewshire Council:

Kevin Carracher (A)
Lisa Henderson (A)
Roseanne Burns (C)

The Moray Council:

Kerrie McNamara (A)

(C) - Certificate (A) - Award

For more information about Customer Service Professional, please email enquiries@customerserviceprofessional.co.uk or visit www.customerserviceprofessional.co.uk

NOTE: Central Admin Point will close at 2.30pm on Xmas Eve, and will reopen on 6th January 2011

eCom Helpdesk (helpdesk@ecomscotland.com) will close from 22nd December, and will reopen on 6th January 2011