Northgate calls for Citizen First approach

Submitted by: Fellows Associates
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Commitment both to the citizen and users should be placed at the heart of local government services, according to Northgate Public Services, one of the country's leading providers of citizen relationship management services to the public sector.

The company, which has recently gained a gold award from Investors in People for its people management practice, is calling on the public sector to further engage and involve citizens in the design and delivery of services. A Citizen First strategic approach involves leadership from the top, employee training and development, citizen and user input, and measurement and assessment.

Russell Osborne, Managing Director of Citizen Solutions, Northgate Public Services said today: "In these hard economic times, the public sector has to innovate and engage with its citizens to deliver improved services. Increasingly, our clients in the public sector are focusing on the need of citizens and delivering services built around their needs. It is time that this best practice became common practice."

The company highlights the practice of two of its clients who have recently won customer service awards as examples of best practice.

Broxtowe Borough Council has recently been awarded the prestigious ServiceMark by the Institute of Customer Service, the professional body for customer service performance and professionalism. It is one of only a handful of local authorities to gain the award. The award measures what citizens think of the council's service and includes an independent assessment by a third party. The Institute report highlighted excellent leadership, the commitment to training of staff and service to their customers that was led from the top, and the fact that the management team had set themselves targets for improvement.

Lisburn City Council has been awarded the Customer Services Excellence Award by the Cabinet Office for its building control service. The assessors were particularly impressed by the development of a customer facing management information system which has evolved from an assessment of changing customer needs, including how the service reaches, interacts and creates business efficiencies for its customers. E-enabled services commenced with putting property certificates online. It has now evolved so that architectural plans can be submitted online, along with an enhanced and integrated email facility for customer interaction.

This development programme is soon to be added to, with the ability to track an applications progress from external PCs, employ remote access working abilities for surveyors and integrate with a corporate GIS facility permitting a 24/7 access to all of integrated services. Customer services will be enhanced further throughout NI local authorities, with the sharing of this technology and subsequent adoption by Belfast, N.Down, Cookstown, and Dungannon Councils.

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Notes to Editors

1.Northgate Public Services is an innovative provider of transformation and improvement services to the public sector. It is committed to high quality public services that place individuals and their communities at their heart. Its knowledge and understanding of people's needs are core to its business, as too, is its depth and breadth across public services.

2.Northgate's task is to enhance public value through the intelligent use of people and technology; to understand why and what change is necessary; to provide new thinking leading to improved performance; and to link company rewards with positive outcomes for the communities for whom it works. It supports transformation through sustainable performance partnerships.

3.In the UK, Northgate works with 95 per cent of local authorities, every police force, and a large number of health organisations, housing associations, utilities and transport companies. Founded in 1969, the company has nearly 8,000 employees.

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