



West Lothian
Council



CITIZEN LED INSPECTION

‘LOOK SEE’

FEEDBACK REPORT

Customer & Communities

CIS Offices

April 2017

INSPECTION TEAM:

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Introduction

The 'Look See' customer experience inspection is designed to bring a depth of insight through a "lighter" version of the council's Citizen Led Inspection. The inspection forms a short, concentrated, specific activity to allow customer inspectors to bring their training and knowledge to bear on a focused area of service provision.

Inspectors score the service based on the set criteria established prior to the inspection and use a rating scale of Excellent, Good, Adequate, Poor and Very Poor.

This is designed to involve customers in reviewing and making changes to services. It is a particularly valuable during periods of change to ensure that service standards and performance is maintained.

Background to the Inspection

West Lothian Council provides a Customer Information Service (CIS) in offices located across West Lothian. This is a frontline, customer facing service aimed at dealing with resident's and customer's range of enquiries, requests and complaints.

The Inspectors met with the service management team prior to undertaking their visits to the CIS offices to allow them to find out more information about the service and if there were any particular issues for them to be aware of or to concentrate on during the inspection. In this instance the inspectors were asked to carry out a general review of all aspects the service offered by CIS. The service did highlight an interest in finding out the inspector's views on the difference between new CIS offices such as Arrochar House and Strathbrock and the older, traditional offices like Armadale and Whitburn.

Inspectors were asked to review the council's CIS offices, using set guidance and criteria but with the scope to expand on this as they saw fit depending on their findings. The inspectors agreed to carry out their inspection throughout the month of April and were free to visit as many CIS offices on as many different occasions as they saw fit.

The staff within the council's CIS offices and Partnership Centres were unaware of the inspection activity going on and inspectors were asked not to identify themselves as inspectors during their visits but were free to interact and engage with staff and other visitors as they deemed appropriate.

The inspection team comprised of:

Carole Mullholland	Alastair Slater	Bill Vallely
Bathgate Partnership Centre	Arrochar House	Arrochar House
Fauldhouse Partnership Centre	Strathbrock Partnership Centre	Armadale CIS
Whitburn CIS		

Summary of Findings

The Inspectors rated the service as follows:

Category		Armadale	Arrochar (2 Inspections)*	Bathgate	Fauldhouse	Strathbrock	Whitburn
1	Information available prior to inspection	Good	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Good	Very Poor
2	Building & Environment	Good	Adequate	Good	Good	Good	N/A
3	Information available during visit	Good	Adequate	Good	Good	Good	N/A
4	Staff Interaction (Reception)	Excellent	Good	Good	Good	Excellent	N/A
5	Staff Interaction (CIS Advisor)	Excellent	Good	Good	N/A	Excellent	N/A
6	Onsite facilities	Good	Good	Good	Good	Excellent	N/A

* At the request of the service Arrochar House was visited by 2 of the inspectors on different days and different times. The ratings, report and recommendations are based on the findings and feedback of both inspectors.

Full Findings of Inspection

The table below highlights the key findings, areas of good practice and recommendations for areas for improvement

(**Arm** = Armadale; **Arr** = Arrochar House; **Bath** = Bathgate; **Fau** = Fauldhouse; **Str** = Strathbrock; **Whit** = Whitburn; **Gen** = General Comments)

Category	Sub Categories of Inspection	Office	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating
1. Information available prior to inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Location ▪ Opening times ▪ On-site facilities ▪ Accessibility ▪ Available parking 	Arm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information on the opening times was available and correct on the website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The “How to find us” map on the Armadale CIS website is incorrect as it points to Coia’s Fish & Chip Shop. ▪ The statement “The Customer Information Service deals face to face with enquiries on all council services” is missing on the Armadale site and some others. 	Good
		Arr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information is easy to find via Google and the council’s website, including opening times and information on the services available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The map on the Livingston CIS (formally known as Livingston Connected) website could have names of adjacent facilities to make its position clearer. (See Appendix 2). ▪ It is not clear from the information on the website about where customers should park if visiting Arrochar House. ▪ There is no indication on the council website that customers may experience a “reduced service” over lunchtime as the number of customers naturally increases but the number of staff decreases. 	Adequate
		Bath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The details, available on the council website, on the location, opening times and the facilities and services available were all good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is no information on available parking or disabled access via the council’s website. ▪ The information on the council website references opening hours of the “Payment Office” which may 	Adequate

Category	Sub Categories of Inspection	Office	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating
				<p>give the impression to customers that this is the only service available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Text size on the webpages (on the list of available services) is small and requires the zoom function. 	
		Fau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The web page for the Partnership Centre was well structured and very clear, including the banners highlighting the services offered in the centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The information about the CIS service is on the side of the page, rather than a banner like the other services, and therefore gets a bit lost. There is no visible information on the website about available parking or disabled access. 	Adequate
		Str	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strathbrock is well featured on the WLC website and is described as “a large facility that caters for all age groups, activities and events” and the information provided on opening times, facilities and services is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No areas for improvement were identified by the inspector. 	Good
		Whit		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was no information available through either Google or the council website regarding Whitburn CIS, therefore the inspector was unable to visit or carry out an inspection 	Very Poor
		Gen		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The webpage “Customer Information Services (CIS) – West Lothian Council” states that there are “seven dedicated offices” but when the page is open it actually lists ten. Opening times are not consistent across web pages. 	
Recommendation(s)		1.1	Review the council web pages for all CIS offices and service activity to ensure accurate information around		

Category	Sub Categories of Inspection	Office	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating
			location, parking, opening times and access is provided.		
2. Building & Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Signage on the building ▪ Accessibility ▪ Clean & Tidy (Interior) ▪ Clean & Tidy (Exterior) ▪ Ambiance 	Arm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The building is small but welcoming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Council Information Services sign facing West is nearly illegible (see appendix 3). 	Good
		Arr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Both the interior and the exterior of the building were clean, tidy and maintained to a good standard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Signage for the building is not clear and cannot be seen from Almondvale Boulevard, unless walking east. This is particularly difficult to see when driving or heading west. ▪ The reception desk is not clearly signposted on entrance to the building, nor is it clear that customers are expected to report to reception. Inspectors headed straight for the CIS office (well sign posted) and there were told to report to the main reception desk only to be sent back to the CIS reception desk ▪ Some of the booths used for clients have insufficient privacy as the conversations can be heard from the waiting areas. ▪ The reception area is “functional and impersonal” and the CIS area was considered to be less user friendly than at Strathbrock. 	Adequate
		Bath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Signage on the exterior of the building as well as that inside the building is informative and visible (with the exception of information on available parking). ▪ Both the interior and exterior of the building is well maintained, clean and tidy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The car park to the side of the building is not signposted well and could be easily missed if traffic lights were not at red. ▪ There is a lack of information in the car park about how long customers are allowed to park for. 	Good

Category	Sub Categories of Inspection	Office	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The general atmosphere and ambience in the buildings is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although there is disabled parking available, disabled customers still have to walk a fair distance uphill to access the building. The reception desk appears to be “cramped” against the wall and could cause issues with available space for staff and customers to move around. 	
		Fau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The interior and the exterior of the building were clean, tidy and well maintained. The signage on the building was good and informative. The general atmosphere and ambience within the building was good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The high fences and gate do not make for a friendly and welcoming of first impressions. Spaces in the car park are taken up by a container. There is no information in the car park to tell users how long they can park for and there were no obvious disabled spaces marked. The glass panel on the front door was messy with posters stuck to it in what appeared a random way. 	Good
		Str	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is well signposted at the traffic lights on the main road. The outside signage also makes clear which entrance to use for which type of service. There is wealth of information available to users as leaflets and posters on the walls of the buildings and in stand-alone racks. The unlocked filing cabinet in the Library section had “Local History” information which would have given a first time visitor a wealth of useful background information about Broxburn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The information leaflets on display appear to be randomly organised making it difficult for a customer to search for a specific subject or event. 	Good

Category	Sub Categories of Inspection	Office	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating
Recommendation(s)		2.1	Review and where necessary renew the exterior signage, including car park information, for Armadale, Arrochar, Bathgate and Fauldhouse.		
		2.2	Provide visible information within Arrochar House to allow visitors to easily identify the reception desk and the need to report there.		
		2.3	Improve the privacy of the booths within the CIS office in Arrochar House to ensure that customer's personal details and conversations cannot be overheard.		
		2.4	Review the location suitability, for both staff and customers, of the reception desk within Bathgate Partnership Centre.		
3.Information available during visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opening Times ▪ On site facilities ▪ On site services ▪ Available parking 	Arm		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is no obvious signpost to where the available parking is located (assessor got parked without any problems). 	Good
		Arr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information on the opening times of the building is very clear when you visit and displayed on the entrance doors. ▪ The rack of information leaflets available in the CIS office was useful. ▪ Reception staff were happy to print information out from the council's website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A similar display, to that in the CIS office, of information material in the reception area may assist some customers and reduce the burden on CIS staff (particularly over lunch times). ▪ The ability to print material from the council website in the reception area may also help deal with a number of customer enquiries. ▪ The lack of available and free parking meant that inspectors were forced to park either illegally or some distance from the building (with the danger of incurring a parking fine if they were too long). ▪ Security barriers stopped them from using the Terrace Car Park despite this being signposted as having 280 spaces. When the inspector enquired 	Adequate

Category	Sub Categories of Inspection	Office	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating
				<p>about this at reception they were advised that this used to be open to the public but had been closed now for staff usage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The inspector was looking for information on noisy neighbours and waste collections but was only able to obtain a one page, print out, from the council's website (this was provided by reception as there was a 40 minute wait for the CIS office). 	
		Bath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information was readily available regarding the services and facilities within the building. ▪ There were extensive documents available on council housing options and applications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The notice board within the reception area highlighting registration services and upcoming marriages would be better and tidier if the board was bigger. ▪ The information screens could be more visible if they faced customers rather than being at the sides of reception. ▪ The waiting area could have been tidier, with number of "tired" magazines left lying. ▪ The information on council housing was difficult to understand, not self-explanatory, including the information around the points system. 	Good
		Fau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information regarding the opening times of the building and services was well displayed. ▪ On site facilities and services were well signposted and visible. ▪ There were extensive documents available on council housing options and applications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The information on council housing was difficult to understand, not self-explanatory, including the information around the points system. 	Good

Category	Sub Categories of Inspection	Office	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating
		Str	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disabled toilets and fire escapes were well indicated by various signs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The overhead signs indicating where various sections are located on the ground floor could be made more visible for a first-time visitor – perhaps with the use of more distinct colours instead of the current, more muted colour scheme. The overhead sign to the right of the Reception Desk is not clearly visible and may cause a problem to a first time visitor if the Reception Desk was unmanned. There are no obvious signs to indicate where medical advice or first aid treatment is available, if required. 	Good
Recommendation(s)		3.1	Improve the internal signage within Strathbrock to make it more visible to customers.		
		3.2	Where possible review the parking arrangement for customers using Arrochar House.		
		3.3	Ensure accurate information regarding Arrochar House parking is available to customers both on the council website and on approach to the building.		
		3.4	Review the quantity, relevance, accuracy and display of information leaflets in all buildings.		
		3.5	Look into the feasibility of providing printing facilities for customers to print their own information as a way of releasing the pressure on staff.		
4. Staff Interaction (Reception)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge Polite & friendly 	Arm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff were wearing full uniform and scarf and very visible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all staff had an obvious ID badge visible. 	Excellent
		Arr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reception staff were willing to help as much as they could but were not as familiar with the inspectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reception desk is not clearly signposted, whereas the CIS office is which lead to the inspector 	Good

Category	Sub Categories of Inspection	Office	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Helpful ▪ Recognisable ▪ Accessible 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enquiry (noisy neighbours) to provide enough information. ▪ Reception staff were recognisable, professional and thorough in terms of the information and details they asked for. 	heading straight there. There were then told to report to the main reception desk only to be sent back to the CIS reception desk. A first time visitor may walk past the reception queue without realising the requirement to report in.	
		Bath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The staff on reception were very polite and friendly and easily recognisable. ▪ They were knowledgeable and helpful, including offering to print information (regarding housing applications) out to save the inspector from waiting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No areas for improvement were identified by the inspector. 	Good
		Fau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The receptionist was polite and friendly and very knowledgeable (regarding housing applications) and was able to deal with the enquiry without the need for the inspector to see a CIS advisor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The receptionist appeared to also be covering the library so had it been busier they may not have been able to provide the same level of service. 	Good
		Str	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The members of staff on reception during the inspection were both identifiable and wearing their council id badges and lanyards. The service provided was speedy, efficient and helpful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No areas for improvement were identified by the inspector. 	Excellent
Recommendation(s)		4.1	Ensure all reception desk staff have a visible council ID badge.		
5. Staff Interaction (CIS Advisor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge ▪ Polite & friendly ▪ Helpful 	Arm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The member of staff who dealt with the enquiry (Lost Travel Pass) was knowledgeable, professional, efficient and polite and was able to handle the inspector's enquiry at the first point. ▪ Staff were all wearing full uniform and scarf. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No areas for improvement were identified by the inspector. 	Excellent

Category	Sub Categories of Inspection	Office	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognisable ▪ Accessible 	Arr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One inspector was seen quickly and the enquiry handled efficiently. ▪ The member of staff who dealt with one of the inspector's enquiries (Blue Badge Application and Waste Collections) was thorough, provided well informed advice and appropriate information on how to complete the necessary forms ▪ For one inspector they made a helpful suggestion that they return it to the Linlithgow office as this would be more convenient for the inspector. ▪ Staff were all in full uniform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ During one inspectors first visit (10th April) there was a 40 minute wait to speak to an advisor and the inspector did not have the time to wait this long. ▪ Some staff did not have an obvious ID badge visible. 	Good
		Bath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The advisor was knowledgeable about Housing Applications as well as the council's new build programme. ▪ The advisor was polite, friendly, helpful and very recognisable and overall it was a welcoming environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The inspector visited over lunchtime and had to wait over 20 minutes to see an advisor. 	Good
		Fau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N/A (the receptionist was able to deal with the enquiry) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N/A (the receptionist was able to deal with the enquiry) 	N/A
		Str	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The member of staff who dealt with the enquiry (noisy neighbour complaint) was courteous, polite and approachable as opposed to being "cold and officious. ▪ The staff member was knowledgeable and answered the inspector's enquiry with a full explanation of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No areas for improvement were identified by the inspector. 	Excellent

Category	Sub Categories of Inspection	Office	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating
			procedure including relevant telephone numbers.		
Recommendation(s)		5.1	Review the staff resource planning for offices, particularly over lunchtime periods, to ensure that there is enough staff available to cover the increased demand for service and limit the waiting time for customers.		
6.On site facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clean & Tidy ▪ Accessibility ▪ User - friendliness 	Arm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The facilities on site were all clean and tidy, accessible and user friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No areas for improvement were identified by the inspector. 	Good
		Arr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The CIS area was clean and tidy although the inspector felt the benches were not as comfortable as those within Strathbrock. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The booth used by the inspector to have their enquiry dealt with was untidy with papers and wrappers on it. 	Good
		Bath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The toilets were clean and tidy and well looked after. ▪ Recycling facilities were available and very visible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The waiting area could have been tidier. 	Good
		Fau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The facilities within the building were clean and tidy, accessible and user friendly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The area behind the reception desk was untidy with boxes and folders visible. 	Good
		Str	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On site facilities within Strathbrock were well maintained and clean. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No areas for improvement were identified by the inspector. 	Excellent
Recommendation(s)		6.1	Ensure all receptions, waiting areas and customer booths in offices are kept tidy.		
7.Overall Findings		Arm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The inspector considered the overall customer service they received to be "excellent" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some external maintenance work is required to the external sign and door to improve the overall appearance of the building. ▪ Consideration should be given to providing additional signage at Armadale Cross to the nearest parking. 	Good
		Arr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enquiries were handled well and professionally by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The information on the council website regarding the 	Adequate

Category	Sub Categories of Inspection	Office	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating
			knowledgeable staff.	<p>location of the building and the available parking could be clearer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Signage on the building is not clear and difficult to see depending on how your approach the building ▪ Available, and free, parking is at a premium and this is especially difficult for disable customers ▪ It is unclear where the reception is and the need to report to it, or consider just having one reception. ▪ The pressure on the service appears to increase at lunchtime as the number of customers increases and staff time off for their own lunch. ▪ Improvements to the quality and quantity of printed material available in the building may help reduce the number of customers requiring to see an advisor ▪ Customer interviews and conversations are not as private as they should be due to the layout of the building. 	
		Bath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The staff (reception and advisors) were friendly, helpful and knowledgeable. ▪ The building and the staff provide a very welcoming environment for service users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The reception area is cramped and more room for staff and customers would benefit everyone. ▪ Information and posters could be displayed in tidier way through use of bigger notice boards 	Good
		Fau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The staff were very helpful and knowledgeable able to deal with the inspectors enquiry. ▪ The building and the staff provide a very welcoming environment for service users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The information displayed on the entrance door could be tidier with maybe the use of frames instead of using blue tac to stick poster. 	Good

Category	Sub Categories of Inspection	Office	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating
		Str	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face to face communications with Council staff was done well at both the reception Desk and at the Customer Information Desk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signage within the building could be clearer and made more visible. 	Good

Customers Observed	Arm	Only one other customer was present during the inspection – a white female, aged 30-40.
	Arr	A number of other customers were present during the inspections, including some using the payments window. They were of a varied gender and age.
	Bath	There were a mix of customers – families and older people, using the facilities, including the library and other council services.
	Fau	There was a reasonable mix of customers (mostly older people) coming and going using various services.
	Str	During the inspection there was a mix of people of all ages using the CIS services.

Conclusions & Next Steps

The inspections carried out by the team highlighted a number of positive aspects of the CIS offices throughout West Lothian and the services they offer to local communities. Staff within the CIS Offices and Partnership Centres were praised by all inspectors as being polite, helpful and knowledgeable regarding the enquiries that were being made and the information that was sought.

Areas for improvement and recommendations have been identified, by the inspection team, across the offices which were visited and the services offered as whole. The main area for improvement highlighted by all of the team was the quality and availability of information to inspectors regarding each office and how to navigate to it and within it, both before and during their visits. This includes location, parking and access as well as where visitors are expected to go when they enter buildings.

The service should now review the findings of the inspectors; take note of the recommendations made and devise an improvement plan to action these. Planned improvements will then be fed back to the inspectors and followed up with the service by the Business Improvement Officers.

For further information please contact Katherine McLaughlin or Daniel Matonti, Performance and Improvement Service.

Performance & Improvement (Citizen Led Inspection Team)

Date: 10/05/2017

Appendix 1: Inspection Evaluation Forms

Appendix 2: Arrochar House Photographs

Appendix 3: Armadale CIS Photographs

Appendix 4: Improvement Plan