**Customer Services Group UK**

**Annual Conference 2022**

**Recruit, Develop, Thrive: staffing in library customer services**

 Questions and feedback

**Icebreaker feedback: What can we learn from our discussions on our own journeys to librarianship / HE that would help us support our staff to develop and thrive in their careers?**

* A customer service background and ethos is more important than a library background for frontline staff.
* Really nice to speak to colleagues who have similar challenges but also some great ideas!
* Similarly started on the Eve shift whilst studying and never left!
* I entered libraries due to a job opening in evenings and weekends that suited my family and ended up loving this new environment. Studied for MSc by distance learning and then after 5 years took up a Duty Manager out of hours post. My advice would be do jobs others don't want to do and be flexible!

**Questions for Keynote: University of Staffordshire**

Q. What was your time frame for designing and implementing the student support system and what challenges did you encounter/how did you overcome them?

A*.* The team redesign took approx. 6 months to plan with a further 6 months for consultation and implementation. From the date of the service implementation date it took at least another 6 months to recruit and train the team close to the stated structure levels. The app was already in existence (developed in-house 2019) and has been continuously improved since

Q. How do you make the app accessible to all users? For example students who are dyslexic.

Q. How does the app work in terms of accessibility; thinking about students who use screen readers, and also those with English as a second or other language?

A. The app is subject to the same accessibility checks and equality impact assessments as other systems made available. There is also the option to use the desktop version. Both have high contrast and text size etc settings as accessibility tools

Q. How soon into someone joining the team do you decide workstreams? Can staff change workstreams?

A. Although there's a lot to get to grips with when joining if a colleague has a real enthusiasm (and possibly expertise) in a topic then they can get involved as soon as they like. They could also change but there has to be a reasonable commitment i.e. not changing every week :)

A. We will introduce the workstreams at an early stages however this would be organic until completion of the induction framework. Workstreams would be discussed at yearly and mid-year professional development reviews and could be changed based on objections/targets following discussion

Q. Is there an expectation from students that someone will be available via the app 24/7 ?

A. We clearly communicate staffed times on our site and on the app. They do of course still have access to in person services that may be required 24/7 such as campus security

Q. Interesting to hear students are still engaging via telephone calls

A. Yes we've had lots of calls this welcome period, and we'd expect that to continue for a number of reasons e.g. rise in international students and people yet to understand where they can get to the answers themselves. However in common with other sectors a self serve approach is becoming normalised

Q. How are the team kept up to date with regard to changes and new services, to make sure consistency and quality is maintained?

A. The team have regular refresher training which is based on services updates and changes. We are currently looking at creating service partnering within the team across the organisation to improve relationships across the uni further

Q. How did you convince staff to wear a uniform?

A. It's a requirement of the role, it is important to buy something the team are happy with in terms of comfort, weather specific, replacements when worn and also being able to change during the week

Q. What is your ratio of students to permanent staff and how has that ratio changed over the last few years ?

A. For front line library and uni customer support (student Connect) only it has gone from approx 500-1 to 800-1 excluding student ambassadors. This is a very rough estimate!

Q. Do you have a joined up student management/customer management system that sits behind the app to ensure all interactions with the service are recorded?

A. We are part way there as a uni with an MS Dynamics approach being taken in Student Support that does this.

Q. Is the library kiosk and student hub still open or is it mostly in person support at the library?

A. The team is mobile so works on rotas around those locations. At unstaffed times they can access chat via their phone or kiosk screens

Q. What size institution is Staffordshire/ student numbers?

A. It's about 12k taught and 16k registered (I think!)

Q: have you got a neat way to identify where multiple enquiries from the sane student to different teams can be identified? I was interested in how you do that to be able to share it and give a single response

A. There is a method but we don't currently use it as it doesn't work so well for the shorter enquiries front of house staff might. Ultimately we have to try and work towards most questions/service requests being self serve to minimise students needing to try various channels to get answers

**Recruitment feedback: What steps are your organisation taking to diversify your workforce? What changes to recruitment are taking place in your organisation?**

* I really like Mark’s idea of an open day. We also sent some of our student workers to an organised library event through Academic Libraries North where they heard from practitioners about their work which they hadn’t really understood prior to attending

**Questions for “Recruitment” presenters**

**For Teesside**

Q. How do you support/encourage more mature staff to engage with new developments/initiatives and in particular technology?

A. We try to offer softer less formal training supported with staff champions to remove some of the pressure

Q. What measures have you taken to confront and help colleagues with library anxiety?

A. We offer regular opportunities to upskill but also for them to shadow other colleagues to help to reduce some of those barriers. Only when it is clear they no longer like or enjoy customer services do we work with them to find something else that suits where they are in their journey

Q. Does requiring a task to be completed in advance discriminate against some candidates? - eg have struggled to find time for prep with young child commitments at weekends

A. In our case we ask them to let us know if the timeline doesn't work and it was an hour task, we sent out on a Thursday and asked for it to be emailed back by the Tuesday (day before the interview) but they knew it was coming a week before it was sent.

Q. Its really disappointing to hear the over 50s you are finding dont want to engage and lack energy and enthusiasm. Its not something we have experienced. Considering over 50s may have 17 years until pension, what have you tried to come to this conclusion?
Are these staff getting a chance to progress?

A. I should stress that it isn’t all staff in that age bracket, only some. We try to support with training and a softer and more regular upskilling so it becomes normal. In fact last week we did promote one of our assistants who is over 50 into a supervisor role as they demonstrated the energy and enthusiasm we want to see

Q. I'd really like to introduce internships and/or apprenticeships at my institution, particularly from an EDI perspective
How/where do you advertise our internships posts?

A. At Teesside we have a job shop where we can advertise roles. Our careers team manage internships and we make our offer known eg. We can take two internships this semester and they help to facilitate.

Q. I'd like to understand your relationship with the public library

A. Historically we have had a good relationship and have co-delivered events eg. Workd book day. It paused due to Covid but they are keen to work in partnership. We are looking at joint work experience opportunities, a young librarian scheme and how we can do some staff exchanges. They have also offered to come at bespoke times to deliver storytelling to students who bring their children into our library eg. At half term. Drop me an email to j.oliver@tees.ac.uk if you’d like to chat through further

**For Westminster**

Q. Do you ever seek feedback from interviewees who weren't successful and if so what have you learned?

A. Yes we have, every single one has said the interview pack was a great help to their interview skills generally and made them want to come and work at Westminster.

Q. Do staff invited to help with interviews need any training? Or are they more observers?

A. Yes they participate, we are currently working on getting our whole staff interview trained so they can take part but also because understanding how interviews work from an recruitment side is a really important CPD activity.

Q. Has any work been done to make the application process more accessible for candidates?

A. This is our next big project and we will report back but so far we are putting together tips for a good application and working with HR on our whole process.

**For Salford**

Q. How did the process work during vacation period and end of year? Was the recruitment completed throughout the whole year or was this at a set time and date?

A. Hi, the time students spend with us in each cycle is about 4 months, so this then means that that we have no students working with us over summer (when we are generally quieter).

Q. How did you service plan if students were able to drop-in to interviews?

A. Hi. We ran two days of drop in interviews, asking students to pre select which allowed us to set expectations of how many students we were expecting each day.. We then booked time away from front line services for ourselves and one of the team, ensuring that there was still enough of the team to cover our service. In between drop in interviews we used the time to work on other projects!

**For Manchester**

Q. Where did you advertise the Open Days to get the widest and most diverse pool of candidates

A. Hi. We advertise the Open Days at the bottom of the job advert. We also include the Customer Services Managers email if potential candidates have further questions re Open Days.

Q. How did you follow up with interviews? Was it a standard interview or did you try and use some of the formats from the open day?

A. Hi. We followed up with a standard interview - we acknowledge that not everyone can attend the open days so we didn't want to put any potential candidates at a disadvantage.

Q. Were you able to find out how many open day attendees followed through with an application being submitted?

A. Hi. We asked candidates at the end of the interview if they had a chance to visit the open days - we stressed that their answer had no bearing on the outcome as it was just a way to find out if the open days had been a positive addition to the recruitment process :)

**Questions for “Empowering Staff” presenters**

**For Birmingham**

Q. How have new staff, who were not initially part of this programme responded ?

A. the team is around 85 in total so does see new starters. When they commence working for us we go through our approach and it links to what others have spoken about values of approach when recruiting

Q. Who did the initial training for managers running groups?

A. Teresa led on this work due to previous experience in this area.

Q. How did you come up with the groups in the first place?

A. We discussed how we could involve staff and drew upon past experience in other careers to come up with the idea of the SI groups. User feedback is also important for forming the groups- some come from necessity e.g. pandemic response, new services coming online