

Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 3 October 2017

Contact Centre - Performance Update: April – July 2017

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Executive Summary

This report provides an update on contact centre performance since the last report to Committee on 28 March 2017 and discharges the Council action from 28 August 2017. The report details current trends and ongoing service improvement activities.

Contact Centre – Performance Update: April – July 2017

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee reviews:
 - 1.1.1 current performance trends within the Contact Centre; and
 - 1.1.2 notes ongoing service and performance improvement activities to ensure that Council services are easy to access and citizen queries and complaints are dealt with effectively.

2. Background

- 2.1 On 8 November 2016 and 28 March 2017 the Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee received updates on contact centre performance, trends, and ongoing service improvement activities. These reports provided detailed performance information that demonstrated a pattern of sustained improvement, with targeted actions to address specific issues.
- 2.2 On 24 August 2017 the City of Edinburgh Council commissioned a further update on contact centre performance and the associated citizen experience. Council highlighted the importance of providing easy to access services and effective query resolution, supported by co-ordinated action between front line service delivery and the Contact Centre.

3. Main report

Overview

- 3.1 The Council is committed to providing an effective and reliable service to all citizens, where quality and getting the basics right is supported by simple and easy to access contact channels of their choosing. The Contact Centre structure focuses on first touch resolution, supported by close working between the Contact team and relevant operational services. The structure delivers a flexible staff group that maximises the number of queries resolved at the initial point of contact, aligned with clear escalation routes where Council services require further input.
- 3.2 Quality of service is a key metric which is measured monthly across every customer contact adviser and is based on set criteria focusing on both technical and soft skills.

- 3.3 The quality score has averaged 90% v target of 80% for last 3 months and is on an upward trajectory as we develop contact centre advisers, providing training and setting the minimum standards and benchmark performance we aim to achieve, as a minimum.

Current Trends

- 3.4 Regular management information is produced to monitor current performance levels and inform future improvement activities. In March 2017, the Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee received an update highlighting that overall contact volumes had generally remained stable and where automation and self-service options existed e.g. Council Tax and Benefits, there was a downward trend in telephone contact being required.

- 3.5 To highlight current performance levels an assessment has been completed comparing the last six months of data reported to Committee in March 2017 (September 2016 - February 2017) with the following five months of data (March 2017 – July 2017). This information is detailed in Appendix 1 and the following key trends have been identified:

- Contact Centre calls answered within 30 seconds (service level performance indicator) is now averaging at 65%, which is a +10% improvement since March 2017.
- Improved baseline Service Level Performance (55% of calls answered within 30 seconds) - 19 out of 24 service lines demonstrated improved service level performance.
- Stretched Service Level Performance (60% to 80% of calls answered in 30 seconds) – 13 out of 24 achieved the stretch target.
- In July 2017, there were 6 services that did not achieve the 55% target, however up to 68% of calls were answered within 60 seconds and up to 85% were answered within 120 seconds. The deployment workforce Management tools and Cross Skilling should allow us to improve the services further.
- Abandoned Calls (10% Service Level Agreement (SLA) - for calls abandoned, 19 out of 24 service lines demonstrated improved performance with 14 out of 24 lines achieving the 8% stretch target and 22 out of 24 lines achieving the standard 10% target for call abandonment.
- For average handling time (AHT), 11 out of 24 service lines recorded higher AHT. This is consistent with a greater focus on first touch resolution, however this area remains a significant focus for future service improvement.
- For average call waiting times, 19 out of 24 service lines demonstrated improved performance.

- 3.6 Contact improvement actions are focused on the continued support for the Housing Repairs service. Service levels have been impacted by the Council's comprehensive response to the high- rise inspection audit, with short periods of

heavy contact volumes. Collaboration with the service and increased resource levels have, however, resulted in sustained improvement over the last 2 months with service levels tracking in the high 60s% and above. Work is also ongoing to support essential health and social care services which have been impacted by experienced staff securing alternative employment. A recent recruitment exercise has been completed to provide additional capacity and work is ongoing to make call flows more efficient, supported by IT investment in a searchable knowledge base for the advisers.

3.7 The Council decision on 24 August 2017 requested a specific update on Council Tax and Waste related contact performance. Both are high volume areas where a close working relationship is required between the Contact Centre and front-line services to ensure a positive customer experience. This continues to be an important responsibility for the respective services with work ongoing to ensure that queries are efficiently recorded, escalated and ultimately addressed by service areas. This work also includes the design of IT systems that provide service feedback and updates where further information has been requested.

3.8 During the last 3 months the following trends have been identified:

- All Council Tax contact performance indicators are tracking ahead of target; with abandoned calls rates at 6.6% (8% stretch target and 10% base line target) service level at 63% (60% stretch target & 55% base line targets) and average handling time has reduced by 17 seconds from 401 to 384 seconds. This is against a target of 340 seconds. There is however a balance here between an efficient handling time and ensuring all queries are resolved at first point of contact, which when actioned correctly can increase AHT's.
- The majority of Waste contact performance indicators (multiple lines) are tracking ahead of target, with abandoned calls ranging between 4-6 % (8% stretched target and 10% base line target) and service level ranging between 63 - 68% (60% stretch target v 55% base line target). Average handling time has increased by between 15 and 39 seconds to 416 – 440 seconds, which is indicative of aiming to improve on first contact resolution.
- The exception within the Waste contact service is the special uplift service with abandoned calls levels at 8.6% (8% stretched target and 10% base line target) and service levels at 50% (55% baseline and 60% stretched target). This is directly linked to a 35% average monthly increase in contact following the introduction of the revised uplift service. This activity has been prioritised by the Council's transformation programme for service automation and online self-service enhancements.

3.9 The Contact Centre also tracks formal complaints relating to contact activities. These fluctuate marginally from month to month, with 54 unique complaints recorded on the Council's Complaints system, Capture, in June 2017. These 54 complaints equate to approximately 0.1% of the total calls handled by the Contact Centre that month. It is understood that not all complaints will be formally reported/recorded on the system and Contact Centre is continuing to target and

address key themes identified by citizens and service users to improve performance. These actions are detailed in the following sections.

- 3.10 As previously reported to Committee the Contact Centre has been piloting an automated customer satisfaction system that undertakes post call satisfaction surveys. This real-time customer satisfaction data is used to inform daily operational plans and enables Team Leaders to follow up feedback with respondents.
- 3.11 Response rates to the satisfaction survey of between 70-80% have been achieved as a result of directed contact. For those services involved in the pilot, query resolution satisfaction has ranged from low 70% to high 80% and adviser behaviour satisfaction has ranged between 80-90%. This data is in line with industry standards and sets a good benchmark to build upon. Targeted action is now being taken, including service engagement to better understand queries and up skilling of teams.
- 3.12 In addition to this specific survey the Contact Team is also using a range of other feedback and citizen groups to help make services as accessible as possible. This includes the Tenant Federation and a specific group looking at the automated telephony system. This feedback is being used to develop and enhance Council services and improve citizen experience and engagement.

Contact - Improvements

- 3.13 Customer is continually reviewing and refining the way residents and businesses can access services in a simple and easy way. To support this, the Council is delivering a range of projects which focus on 'one and done' activities, reduce repeat contact and give customers more independence and flexibility to carry out their transactions, including self-service options.

First Contact Resolution results range from 80-85% across all teams, compared with the Industry Benchmark which is 80%. The focus here is on resolving the enquiry on the first call to avoid any unnecessary repeat contact.

Automated Telephony System

- 3.14 The Contact Centre operates an automated menu system (IVR) that provides self-service links and call routing capabilities. This system has been used in Council Tax and Benefits for a number of years and has now been rolled out to other areas including Roads, Waste and Environmental services. The system delivers additional call handling capacity and important service efficiencies, whilst still retaining the option for a citizen to speak to an agent to discuss issues at all times.
- 3.15 To date, many citizens have successfully used the automated system, with approximately 65% of contacts using the self-service option, including messaging and text links to the Council's website. These levels are consistent with industry customer standards.

- 3.16 There is, however, recognition that the system could be simpler and a number of service users have indicated that they found the system difficult to navigate. As a result, user feedback has been analysed and used to help redesign the automated system. This has included reducing the number of options, enabling citizens to re-join the system at key points and reviewing the wording used to describe each service. This is designed to make it easier and quicker to navigate through to the correct services. As before, citizens continue to have the option to speak with a customer adviser at all times.
- 3.17 Information will be added to the Council's Web Site on the options to select to get through to correct service quickly. This will help inform and act as a useful reminder to Citizens on how to navigate the automated system.
- 3.18 As part of the Contact Centres engagement with a citizens panel, made up of volunteers who provided feedback and raised concerns about the original set up, have been involved in testing the new arrangements. Contact will continue to collect this important customer feedback and it will be used to develop and improve the telephone service in the coming months.

Online forms

- 3.19 The Contact Centre team is a major stakeholder, along with delivery services, in the rollout of easy to use online services and forms. The Contact Centre has prioritised high volume, resource intensive transactions to be fast tracked for online services e.g. special uplifts, non-emergency repairs and licensing activities. These are being assessed by the Council's channel shift programme, which is currently being re-planned for delivery during the remainder of 2017/18.

Kiosks

- 3.20 The Council has now installed 21 self-service kiosks across the city. These kiosks help citizens and service users who don't have online access at home, to complete transactions and make payments in locality offices. This gives people greater choice and means they can use the service without having to potentially wait to speak with staff if they don't need to.
- 3.21 These kiosks provide access to an increasing number of services, including Council Tax and Benefits and Parking Permit services. Uptake is in the early stages as we continue to work to educate Citizens and is currently sitting around 5% – 10%. We continue to work with the community to demonstrate the functionality and will continue to monitor volume usage as additional services are introduced as part of the ongoing channel shift programme.

Text Reminders

- 3.22 A new Council Tax service is being trialled that sends a text reminder to citizens when a payment is due. The text includes a simple link to make payment through the Council's payment system. The text message also includes a phone number, so that customers without a smartphone can still make payments.

- 3.23 This provides people with greater choice by way of an additional payment channel that is easy and convenient to use and by reacting positively to the text message, arrears and formal recovery action are avoided.
- 3.24 The Council also benefits as this service is more cost effective than traditional mail and text messages reach the citizen instantly rather than after several days, as is the case with paper reminders.

Clothing Grants and Free School Meals

- 3.25 A new clothing grants and free school meals application process has been successfully launched that removes the need for a separate application and automatically makes payment direct to the applicant's bank accounts. This improvement provides a simpler and quicker approach, consistent with the Council's move towards a single financial assessment.

Customer Sign-On for Online Services

- 3.26 The Customer team in conjunction with ICT, Information Governance, Communications and Channel Shift colleagues continue to review the appropriate use of the customer account facility to use and request services.
- 3.27 While registering and logging-in to the service is an additional step this offers a number of benefits, both now and in the future, including data protection and fraud prevention. Also by registering the Council will soon be able to offer a personalised service, with updates on requests and information specific to their local area.
- 3.28 The mygovscot service used by the Council to register for services is provided by the Scottish Government's Improvement Service. It is understood that there are enhancements that can be made to the registration process and the Council is working with the SGIS to ensure that sign on arrangements are not a digital barrier to simple online service delivery.

Customer Relationship Manager (CRM), Social Media and New Telephony System

- 3.29 The demand for social media engagement with the Council continues to grow and the Contact Centre has recently been expanded to provide a more customer focused "one and done" approach. This is an ongoing process and requires to be underpinned by strong service links to ensure residents and visitors to the city can be updated quickly on service issues. This will be supported by new technology including webchat, system integration and consistent, up to date customer records. These upgrades are key elements of the Council's channel shift programme
- 3.30 A new telephony system will be implemented across Quarter 4 2017. This will deliver a range of benefits including system stability and an improved view of the citizen's end to end journey, where repeated contact can be escalated and dealt with as a priority. Work has also recently been completed to update the Council's service database to ensure that reporting lines and telephone numbers are

accurate. This will assist Contact Centre staff when attempting to redirect customer queries to the correct services.

- 3.31 In addition to these activities a number of simple solutions are also being introduced that do not involve new technology. This includes reviewing the Council's web pages to make them simpler, easier to navigate and more accessible.

Service Links

- 3.32 As noted at Council in August, the responsibility to improve the customer journey is a joint one between front line services and the Contact Centre. Additional resource has been identified to strengthen the link between front-line operations and the Contact Centre. This resource is focused on liaising with delivery activities to ensure that the Contact Centre is well informed to update residents and service users on specific issues. For example, the introduction of the 'Route smart' system in Waste will provide real time information on waste collection activities that can be accessed by the Contact Centre to improve informative communication with service users.
- 3.33 The Contact Centre continues to engage with front-line teams to ensure that service requests are being appropriately progressed and where this is not the case the reasons for service failure. This engagement is informed by an analysis of the initial citizen contact e.g. service request, service failure, simple requests for information, repeat requests etc. to improve the overall customer journey and related service decisions.

Development and Scheduling

- 3.34 A programme of training and cross skilling is continuing within Customer to provide greater multi-skilling of staff to address immediate service pressures. This flexibility has enabled the team to support wider initiatives such as the Council's co-ordinated assessment of high rise properties in the city and service outages.

Customer at the Heart

- 3.35 Training programme is also being delivered to colleagues to help with first call resolution and highlight the importance of taking ownership and responsibility for every enquiry. As well as improving the experience of service users.
- 3.36 A workforce management tool has recently been implemented within Contact to improve demand forecasting and work scheduling. This will enable the service to align staff with anticipated contact levels, deploy people more effectively, whilst also allowing the service to model contact consequences for non-standard events such as severe weather and new initiatives. The system will initially be rolled out within the Contact Centre but it has the potential to be used across the Council.
- 3.37 All of the above initiatives are expected to enhance the citizen experience, create greater choice, and reduce associated service pressures.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 Performance against target is regularly reviewed to ensure issues are addressed and service level improvements are achieved.
- 4.2 Key statistics are included in Directorate and Council dashboards. Targets are based on the approved resource profile and benchmarked against similar organisations.
- 4.3 Team leaders monitor live performance information within the Contact Centre and use this to respond dynamically to demand. Daily, weekly, and monthly reports are produced and scrutinised by senior management.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. The service is on target to deliver savings as part of the Council's Transformation Programme.

6. Risk, policy, compliance, and governance impact

- 6.1 The delivery of high performing contact services, both online and through telephony channels is a key objective for the Council.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report. The Council remains committed to a digital by desire approach ensuring that we are catering for all Citizens across Edinburgh providing them options around their preferred contact channel of choice. This will range from the traditional service of speaking with an adviser to transacting on-line.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 There are no direct sustainability impacts as a result of this report.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 The Customer team uses a broad range of feedback and citizen groups to support service development and improvement.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 Minute of Council Meeting 24 August 2017
- 10.2 Report to Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee, 28 March 2017 – [Customer Contact Update](#)

10.3 Report to Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee, 8 November 2016 – [General Switchboard and Website Enquiries](#)

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11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Contact Performance Data.

Contact Centre Performance Data**Abandoned Calls**

Call abandonment levels are monitored through regular performance reports. The agreed target, based on the current resource profile, is that the abandonment rate does not exceed 10%, with a stretch target of 8%. Since the last report to Committee improvements have been made with 19/24 service lines demonstrating improved performance, with 22/24 achieving the 10% target and 14/24 achieving the 8% stretch target. A dedicated improvement plan is in place to further improve performance levels in Repairs Direct and improve Social Direct call performance following the departure of experienced staff. New additional resource is now in place and cross skilling activities are ongoing to bolster capacity in both areas. ICT improvements are also being progressed including the successful implementation of a dedicated workforce management tool, creation of simple online forms and the rollout of a knowledge base that will improve call handling times.

Average Handling Time (AHT)

Average call handling times are monitored through regular performance information reports. AHT is the average time an agent spends with the customer to deal with the query. Since the last update in February 2017 11/24 service lines are reporting higher AHT. This is consistent with a greater emphasis on first touch resolution; however, this measure remains an ongoing focus for service improvement.

Average Wait Times

Since the last update in February 2017 average wait times have improved for 19 of 24 service lines. Detailed improvement actions are included in the main report.

Service Levels

This indicator details the percentage of calls answered within 30 seconds. The target varies depending on the service, ranging from 55% (60% stretch target) to 80% (stretch target). The historical target of 55% is based on the existing resource profile and recent bench-making activity with similar organisations. Since February 2017 19/24 lines have demonstrated improved performance with 13/24 achieving their identified stretch target and 18/24 achieving the 55% target.

Actions are being progressed to better deal with service demands, including colleague cross skilling, workforce planning, call coaching etc. and targeted additional resource has been put in place to tackle demand in key services.

Calls Handled

This indicator details the number of calls dealt with by the Contact Team. The extension of the Council's automated call handling system/weblinks in Waste and Environmental services is a key factor in the reduction in these areas. This is detailed in the main report.

Contact Activity	Abandoned Calls Monthly Average Sept 16- Feb 17	Abandoned Calls Monthly Average March 17- July 17
Anti Social Behaviour	8.1%	4.5%
Central Emergency Service	8.5%	6.7%
C & F Professional Child	7.7%	9.8%
C & F Public Child	6.5%	8.4%
Emergency Child	2.2%	3.2%
Clarence	18.3%	8.5%
Council Tax	10.6%	6.6%
Benefits	8.3%	3.1%
NDR	9.0%	5.7%
Customer Care	4.2%	3.3%
Emergency Home Care Worker	4.9%	4.8%
Emergency Home Care	4.1%	3.7%
Emergency Social Work Service	5.4%	4.2%
1Edinburgh	19.4%	9.6%
Repairs Direct	32.4%	21.2%
Repairs Planners	9.9%	8.2%
Social Care Direct Professional Adult	7.3%	9.2%
Social Care Direct Public Adult	8.9%	17.2%
Repairs - Tradesman	14.8%	9.7%
Repairs - Quality Care Officers	8.7%	5.3%
Special Waste Uplifts	23.5%	8.6%
Waste	24.5%	4.2%
Environment	25.6%	5.9%
Missed Collections	24.9%	4.6%

Average Handling Times - Monthly Average Sept 16- Feb 17	Average Handling Times - Monthly Average March 16- July 17
333	245
385	390
555	564
513	494
467	467
228	235
465	448
409	398
374	452
256	249
286	269
336	307
390	373
145	139
428	399
188	182
514	550
591	620
396	401
538	527
331	343
253	271
233	272
261	276

Average Wait Times Monthly Average Sept 16 - Feb 17	Average Wait Times Monthly Average Mar 17 - July 17
00:48	00:31
00:38	00:30
00:35	00:59
00:33	01:00
00:17	00:21
01:51	01:01
03:35	01:36
02:55	01:18
02:36	01:49
00:45	00:38
00:14	00:13
00:14	00:11
00:17	00:16
02:17	01:16
04:35	03:05
00:45	00:36
00:34	01:03
00:48	02:01
01:16	00:52
01:40	01:01
04:56	02:50
04:36	01:12
04:02	01:21
04:31	01:14

Contact Activity	Service Level Monthly Average Sept 16 - Feb 17	Service Level Monthly March 17 - July 17 Base line target 55%	2017/18 Stretch Internal Target	Call Handled Monthly Average Sept 16 - Feb 17	Calls Handled Monthly Average March 17- July 17
Anti Social Behaviour	78%	81%	80%	33	72
Central Emergency Service	71%	78%	80%	2512	2161
C & F Professional Child	74%	67%	80%	677	733
C & F Public Child	76%	68%	80%	528	586
Emergency Child	85%	82%	80%	62	68
Clarence	40%	60%	60%	1575	936
Council Tax	50%	63%	60%	6043	6813
Benefits	49%	67%	60%	4482	4066
NDR	57%	61%	60%	906	813
Customer Care	79%	81%	80%	756	943
Emergency Home Care Worker	86%	87%	80%	3050	3089
Emergency Home Care	86%	88%	80%	470	507
Emergency Social Work Service	85%	87%	80%	1602	1694
1Edinburgh	34%	53%	60%	2495	1403
Repairs Direct	29%	41%	80%	10219	8573
Repairs Planners	67%	71%	80%	3720	3618
Social Care Direct Professional Adult	68%	52%	80%	110	115
Social Care Direct Public Adult	67%	46%	80%	3940	4176
Repairs - Tradesman	44%	55%	80%	2723	2668
Repairs - Quality Care Officers	35%	51%	80%	268	446
Special Waste Uplifts	29%	50%	60%	1774	2667
Waste	23%	68%	60%	2325	863
Environment	26%	63%	60%	4810	1486
Missed Collections	24%	67%	60%	3237	892