

Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 7 August 2018

Contact Centre Performance Update: January – June 2018

Item number	8.2
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	
Council Commitments	

Executive Summary

The report details the Contact Centre performance trends since January 2018 and associated service improvement activities.

Contact – Performance Update: January to June 2018

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee reviews and notes the:
 - 1.1.1 current performance trends within the Contact Centre;
 - 1.1.2 ongoing service and performance improvement activities to ensure that Council services are easy to access and citizen queries and complaints are dealt with effectively; and,
 - 1.1.3 revised performance target to include 60% of call answered within 60 seconds and a customer satisfaction target of over 75%.

2. Background

- 2.1 Over the last 18 months the Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee has received regular updates on Contact Centre performance, trends, and ongoing service improvement activities. These reports provide detailed performance information that demonstrates current trends, supported by targeted actions to address specific issues.

3. Main report

Overview

- 3.1 The Council is committed to providing an effective, accessible and reliable service to all citizens, supported by simple and easy to use contact channels. The Contact Centre team aims to maximise the number of queries resolved at the first point of contact, aligned with clear escalation routes where further input is required from other Council services. The Contact Centre team currently supports phone calls (inbound and outbound), e-mails, social media channels and web chat.

Current Trends and Service Performance

- 3.2 Regular management information is produced to monitor performance levels and inform future improvement activities. During the first 6 months of 2018 there have been a number of challenges to sustain the positive performance levels achieved during 2017, including the severe weather in the early stages of the year, the replacement of the Council's telephony system and a 5% increase in demand levels for telephony contact, compared with the previous 6 months. This has resulted in capacity and service pressures during the initial monitoring period for 2018.

Despite these challenges, there has been a general improvement in performance trends during April and May, with a further rise in demand levels experienced in June 2018, in part related to the launch of the Garden Waste collection registration process.

3.3 Key performance data and trends for the Contact Centre are detailed in Appendix 1, with the major themes highlighted in the following section:

- Total Calls answered for the 6-month period from January to June 2018 was 354,996. This shows an increase of 16,444 from our last reporting period.
- It should be noted that Customer Contact is only resourced to deliver 55% of calls answered within 30 seconds and 23 of 39 service lines achieved or exceeding the 55% historical service level target. This is a reduction from July to December 2017, when 33 lines achieved the service level target, which is due to the increased volumes received.
- 30 of our 39 lines were within the 10% call abandonment tolerance target with 22 lines achieving the 8% stretch tolerance target.
- 20 of our 39 lines have reported an increase in average handling time (AHT). This reflects the ongoing programme of support and up-skilling to develop service knowledge and call handling skills, with a wider focus on first touch resolution. This is a positive result given recent staff turnover and the need to induct and train new contact centre operatives.
- The quality of service provided by the Contact Centre is measured via an assessment of contact adviser performance against a series of set criteria covering both technical and soft skills. For the last 6 months the Contact Centre has scored 96%, against a target of 80%, demonstrating a consistency of performance and positive quality of service outcomes.

3.4 The Council's new telephony system (Mitel) enables citizen satisfaction levels to be monitored, with Team leaders receiving real time alerts on low scoring satisfaction surveys. This allows for immediate intervention and remedial actions with citizens and staff. This tool will be further developed during the remainder of 2018/19 with a target to consistently achieve the current public sector industry customer satisfaction standard of 75%. The team are also exploring how to expand text messaging functionality further to measure citizen satisfaction, such as that utilised by the NHS in England with the Friends and Family Test.

3.5 Formal complaints relating to contact activities are tracked, with an average of 32 unique complaints recorded per month for the first half of 2018. Complaint levels remain comparatively low, equating to less than 0.1 % of calls handled by the Contact Centre in the reporting period. The largest complaint theme related to service failure. The Contact Centre team continues to work closely with relevant Council services to ensure that accurate service commitments and expectations are given to citizens. Where there has been a service failure the Contact Centre team

now takes greater responsibility to ensure that issues and queries are directly monitored and resolved, in conjunction with the relevant service areas.

- 3.6 The team is continuing to reflect citizen feedback in the design of the automated call handling system to strike the appropriate balance between self-service and issues that require the intervention of an advisor.

Improvement Activities and Efficiencies

- 3.7 The latest data highlights that contact performance fluctuates when there is increased demand, often as a result of external factors. The new workforce management system is used to plan for, and mitigate wherever possible, these impacts and team resources continue to be deployed flexibly to reduce forecast pressure points.
- 3.8 The Contact team is also introducing a wide range of changes designed to improve the citizen experience and to achieve its targeted efficiencies of 15% in 2018/19. This work includes call handling efficiencies and the introduction of multi-channel and self-service opportunities. A significant proportion of this work is dependent on the introduction of a comprehensive customer relationship management (CRM) system and this is being jointly progressed with ICT and the Council's ICT Partner, CGI.
- 3.9 Good progress has been made in key areas including services such as the special uplift service. This is a high-volume transaction, with increasing demand, and whilst previously citizens could only request a pick up during Contact Centre operating times, the launch of an online form now means the service can be accessed at any time. 3092 special uplift items have been reported via the online tool since its launch in April 2018, resulting in a downward trend on call volumes into this element of the Contact Centre in the last 2 months.
- 3.10 A non-emergency repairs form has been also created that provides tenants greater flexibility to request jobs in their homes. This activity was developed following tenant feedback with direct input from the Edinburgh Tenants Federation. Before the form went live, tenants could only call or e-mail repair requests and since the "soft launch" almost 1000 online job requests have been actioned. This is enabling tenants to report jobs 24/7, 365 days a year.
- 3.11 A comprehensive knowledge base is being introduced that will enable Contact Centre agents to answer a wider range of citizen queries. Webchat has also been launched to support Environmental services, with other services such as repairs, Council Tax and customer care to follow in the second half of 2018. Webchat has proved popular with citizens with 63% rating the service as good, great or excellent. This is an important tool for the team as multiple engagement can be supported more efficiently. Citizen feedback shows that 68% would have used the telephone as their alternative method of contact had webchat not been available.
- 3.12 The number of citizens engaging with the Council via social media continues to grow and the Contact Centre Team has recently been expanded to provide a more

citizen focused “one and done” approach on a 24/7 basis. This is also generating more positive feedback.

- 3.13 As part of the planned customer improvement and efficiency plans the current switchboard facility was removed on 1 July. This change was supported by robust internal communications highlighting the availability of colleague contact information on the Council's intranet. External calls to the former switchboard facility are now blended across appropriate Contact Centre teams with a view to advising callers about the direct number, therefore reducing unnecessary call transfers and duplication of effort.

Emerging Issues

- 3.14 In recent years the Contact Centre has operated a service baseline of 55% of calls answered within 30 seconds, with a small number of key services targeted to answer 80% of calls within 30 seconds. The recent implementation of a dedicated workforce management tool has enabled the team to more accurately predict resource levels and, if an 80% performance level is to be achieved consistently across all current contact lines, it has been estimated that an additional 65 full-time equivalent staff would be required, at a recurring cost of £1.6m.
- 3.15 Such a significant investment needs to be carefully considered in light of complaint trends, with relatively few complaints received that specifically relate to call response or handling times. This is consistent with recent call trends which have seen abandoned call rates remain consistent around the 8% stretch target over the last 12 months. Industry standards have also seen call response time targets either removed or increased to typically between 60-120 seconds.
- 3.16 As a result, it is proposed to adjust the standard service level target from 55% of calls answered within 30 seconds to 60% in 60 seconds. This proposal is in line with current resource and the projected savings profile for the Contact Team. This target retains an effective level of stretch that will be met through the ongoing modernisation and improvement activities detailed in the earlier section of this report.
- 3.17 A higher service level will be maintained for a small number of essential services (Customer Care, Emergency Social Work Services, Out of Hours Support and Social Care Direct) and resources will be prioritised accordingly. For example, the Social Care Direct contact service has seen higher demand over the last 6 months, with a 20% increase in calls. In order to consistently achieve an 80% call handling performance an additional 5 FTE will be required, which is being considered by the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership as part of the wider social care review.
- 3.18 The Contact Centre team is also continuing to explore new opportunities for automation and self service. This will ensure resource is maximised for those services that require agent or face to face interaction and support.

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 set using the approved resource profile and benchmarked against similar organisations. Performance measures primarily focus on call efficiency; first touch resolution, agent quality and customer satisfaction and experience.
- 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 The Contact Centre Team is projected to deliver a further 15% efficiency saving within 2018/19 and this will be achieved through a number of routes, including greater self service, a rationalised cash collection operation and improved call handling supported by customer relationship management. Where appropriate and subject to a comprehensive integrated impact assessment, predominately online services will also be considered in specific areas, e.g. interaction with businesses.

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 continues to progress a primarily digital by design approach to ensure that all Citizens are supported, providing them with appropriate and accessible service options. This adopts the standard call centre and shared services methodology of providing a range of channels, including: self-service options, call based options, face to face interaction at a customer hub or locality office.
- 7.2 As the Council's online offering develops and matures consideration will be given as how best to further encourage and improve uptake of both self-service and online transactional options, supported by automation where appropriate.

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 [Customer Performance Update: July – December 2017](#) – Report to Corporate, Policy and Strategy, February 2018
- 10.2 [Contact Centre Performance Update: April to July 2017 - Report to Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee, October 2017](#)
- 10.3 [Minute of Council Meeting 24 August 2017](#) – Automated Service – Customer Journey, Motion by Councillor Johnston
- 10.4 Report to Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee, 28 March 2017 – [Customer Contact Update](#)
- 10.5 Report to Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee, 8 November 2016 – [General Switchboard and Website Enquiries](#)

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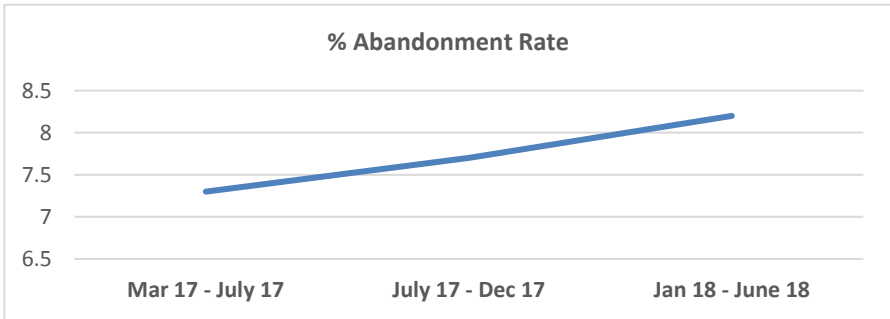
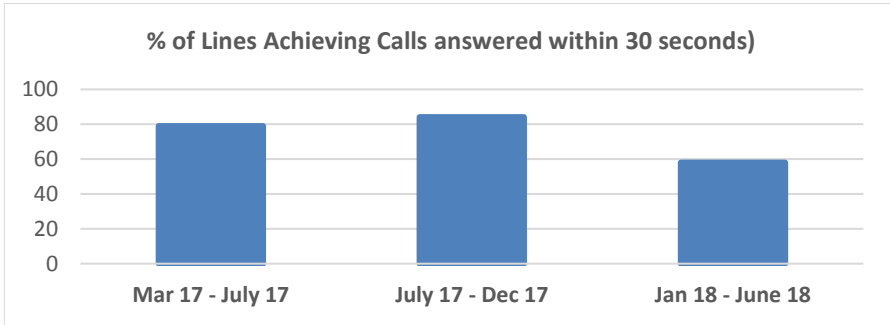
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11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Customer Centre Performance Data

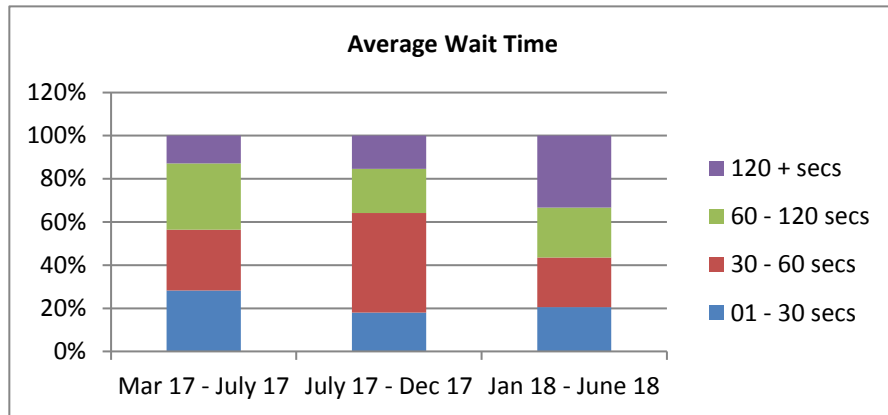
Contact Centre Performance Overview

Performance Measure



Commentary

- First 6 months of 2018 saw significant challenges, including adverse weather conditions and the replacement of the Council telephony system
- 5% increase in call volumes compared with previous 6 months
- 23/39 lines achieved service level across the Contact Centre, a reduction from July to December 17 when 33/39 lines achieved service level target
- Service improvement plans are in place to introduce a range of changes designed to improve the citizen experience and achieve agreed performance targets.
- Slight increase in the overall call abandonment rate to just over 8% for the last period. The Contact Centre is therefore answering almost 92% of all calls received.
- 30 of 39 lines are achieving 10% call abandonment threshold target
- 22 lines are already achieving call abandonment stretch threshold target of 8% and under.



- Average call waiting times have increased during the last 6 months, with 44% of calls being answered within 60 seconds or less, decreasing from 64% during the period July to December 2017
- Ongoing focus to improve first touch resolution to ensure that whilst citizen in some cases is spending slightly longer waiting for an agent every attempt will be made to resolve the query at that time
- Ongoing activity to introduce simple self serve functionality to reduce citizens need to call the Contact Centre
- Ongoing training focus on contact agent's technical and soft skills.

Contact Centre - Performance Data

Contact Activity & Timescale	% Calls answered within 30 seconds SLA target of 55% with stretch target of 60 – 80%				Abandonment target - not exceed 10%, with a stretch target of 8%				Average Wait Times			
	Mar 17 - July 17	July 17 - Dec 17	Jan 18 - June 18	Trend Jul/Dec to Jan/Jan	Mar 17 - July 17	July 17 - Dec 17	Jan 18 - June 18	Trend Jul/Dec to Jan/Jan	Mar 17 - July 17	July 17 - Dec 17	Jan 18 - June 18	Trend Jul/Dec to Jan/Jan
Anti Social Behaviour	81%	75%	83%	▲	4.5%	11.7%	2.8%	▲	00:31	00:35	00:23	▲
Central Emergency Service	78%	73%	70%	▼	6.7%	8.0%	7.3%	▲	00:30	00:37	00:52	▼
C & F Professional Child	67%	73%	69%	▼	9.8%	6.3%	7.8%	▼	00:59	00:49	01:11	▼
C & F Public Child	68%	71%	67%	▼	8.4%	6.5%	9.2%	▼	01:00	00:48	01:31	▼
Emergency Child	82%	73%	77%	▲	3.2%	4.8%	3.5%	▲	00:21	00:41	00:43	▼
Clarence	60%	64%	49%	▼	8.5%	6.0%	9.4%	▼	01:01	00:56	01:53	▼
Council Tax	63%	55%	39%	▼	6.6%	8.2%	11.8%	▼	01:36	02:03	03:30	▼
Benefits	67%	66%	51%	▼	3.1%	3.3%	6.3%	▼	01:18	01:18	02:27	▼
NDR	61%	53%	47%	▼	5.7%	7.2%	9.3%	▼	01:49	02:15	02:36	▼
Customer Care	81%	76%	86%	▲	3.3%	4.1%	2.4%	▲	00:38	00:48	00:26	▲
Food Bank	71%	65%	42%	▼	4.7%	8.7%	27.6%	▼	01:06	01:26	05:45	▼
Emergency Home Care	87%	85%	88%	▲	4.8%	5.1%	4.2%	▼	00:13	00:14	00:14	▼
Emergency Home Care	88%	73%	87%	▲	3.7%	3.3%	4.1%	▼	00:11	00:14	00:17	▼
Emergency Social Work	87%	86%	88%	▲	4.2%	4.4%	3.5%	▲	00:16	00:17	00:19	▼
Interpretation	64%	88%	96%	▲	10.0%	11.8%	5.0%	▲	00:53	00:09	00:02	▲
ITS Daytime	75%	87%	82%	▼	7.7%	4.5%	11.0%	▼	00:12	00:06	00:39	▼
1 Edinburgh	53%	56%	43%	▼	9.6%	8.4%	11.8%	▼	01:16	01:14	02:10	▼
Repairs Direct	41%	56%	39%	▼	21.2%	13.0%	18.6%	▼	03:05	01:56	03:24	▼
Repairs Planners	71%	71%	72%	▲	8.2%	7.8%	5.3%	▲	00:36	00:36	00:39	▼
SCD Professional Adult	52%	39%	59%	▲	9.2%	12.2%	8.2%	▲	01:03	01:35	01:09	▲
SCD Public Adult	46%	32%	54%	▲	17.2%	26.2%	14.6%	▲	02:01	03:35	02:25	▲
Welfare Fund Community	53%	48%	45%	▼	10.2%	12.1%	11.7%	▲	02:16	03:07	03:13	▼
Welfare Fund Crisis	44%	44%	42%	▼	10.7%	11.3%	7.1%	▲	04:14	04:52	06:21	▼
Repairs - Tradesman	55%	64%	54%	▼	9.7%	7.6%	8.9%	▼	00:52	00:40	01:16	▼
Repairs - Quality Care	51%	59%	47%	▼	5.3%	5.3%	5.4%	▼	01:01	00:47	01:26	▼
Special Waste Uplifts	50%	51%	38%	▼	8.6%	8.3%	13.4%	▼	02:50	02:50	02:55	▼
Waste Environment	68%	64%	40%	▼	4.2%	3.7%	8.7%	▼	01:12	01:10	02:18	▼
Missed Collections	67%	64%	46%	▼	4.6%	4.8%	9.3%	▼	01:14	01:07	02:00	▼
FM Helpdesk	86%	78%	89%	▲	5.8%	9.5%	3.2%	▲	00:15	00:23	00:12	▲
Building Standards	77%	68%	60%	▼	2.1%	4.8%	5.6%	▼	00:29	00:52	01:03	▼
Planning	76%	68%	61%	▼	2.0%	3.7%	5.7%	▼	00:33	00:52	01:02	▼
PBS Building Payments	83%	67%	57%	▼	3.3%	6.3%	9.7%	▼	00:22	00:48	01:16	▼
CE Local Office	74%	71%	71%	▼	9.5%	7.4%	8.0%	▼	00:25	00:32	00:29	▲
EE Local Office	72%	69%	70%	▲	7.2%	7.4%	6.8%	▲	00:38	00:41	00:32	▲
NE Local Office	70%	70%	74%	▲	7.1%	6.6%	3.5%	▲	00:36	00:36	00:30	▲
SE Local Office	78%	73%	73%	▼	6.3%	6.6%	4.6%	▲	00:27	00:32	00:30	▲
SWE Local Office	72%	73%	72%	▼	10.9%	8.5%	6.3%	▲	00:25	00:25	00:33	▼
WE Local Office	70%	70%	70%	▼	10.5%	9.4%	7.8%	▲	00:33	00:33	00:30	▲

Commentary

- Calls answered within 30 seconds – 13/39 with improving trend
- Abandonment target – 17/39 with improving trend
- Average Wait Times – 11/39 with improving trend
- Business cases and improvement plans developed to address services outside tolerance - utilising flexible resource and new processes to support the customer journey