

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 01 December 2020

Contact Centre Performance: January - September 2020

Item number	
Executive/Routine	Routine
Wards	All
Council Commitments	

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Committee notes:
 - 1.1.1 current performance trends within the Contact Centre;
 - 1.1.2 ongoing improvement activities to ensure that Council services are easy to access, and citizen queries and complaints are dealt with effectively; and
 - 1.1.3 service delivery changes as a result of COVID-19 restrictions.

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Report

Contact Centre Performance: January - September 2020

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The report details Contact Centre performance for January to September 2020 and outlines associated service improvement activities, as well as changes to service delivery resulting from COVID-19 restrictions.

3. Background

- 3.1 Committee normally receives quarterly updates on Contact Centre performance, trends, and ongoing service improvement activities. This report covers a 9-month period from January 2020 to September 2020 with a focus on July to September 2020. The longer reporting period reflects the changes to Committee reporting during the ongoing pandemic.

4. Main report

Overview

- 4.1 The Contact 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 team currently supports phone calls (inbound and outbound), e-mails, social media channels, web chat and chat bot functionality.

Current Trends and Service Performance

- 4.2 The Contact Centre was required to adapt and rapidly introduce new ways of working because of COVID-19 restrictions. These activities ensured emergency and critical lines remained open from March 2020. Initial calls were answered using mobile telephony (which resulted in manual data collation) before the roll out of our Mitel at home solution from May 2020. This new functionality enabled the Contact Centre to incrementally expand contact activities and this work was aligned with wider service recovery activities across the Council. By October 2020 the Council's main customer service and query contact lines were operational. This level of operation requires the Contact team to operate a blended home working and office-based model.

- 4.3 Throughout 2020 the Contact Team has supported a range of additional COVID related support functions. These include support for shielding and vulnerable citizens, financial support through benefit advice and crisis grants and ongoing support for those self isolating. The shielding and vulnerable phone lines opened during the reporting period, and resource was redistributed from across the Contact team to support these critical services. The team handled 10,745 calls and 2,287 emails during the period April to September 2020, providing guidance and support to residents across Edinburgh. The team also completed over 12,000 outbound welfare calls during the same period to check on shielded individuals in-line with Scottish Government guidance.
- 4.4 These initiatives continue to create additional resourcing and logistical challenges and pressures for the processing and contact teams in Customer. These are managed through dynamic workforce planning and management arrangements which have been embedded for some time.
- 4.5 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 July to September 2020 were 122,214. This reflects the Contact Centre's revised operational arrangements. These volumes represent the busiest reporting period since the start of lockdown. For comparison 178,640 calls were answered in the same reporting period in 2019.
 - The call volumes in the current reporting period are an increase on the April – June 2020 reporting period, where the team answered 69,585 calls. This aligns with the Contact Centre's focus on critical service at that time.
 - 96% of lines open during July to September 2020 met or exceed the service level of answering 60% of calls within 60 seconds.
 - 19 of 28 lines achieved the stretch target of 8% in the current reporting period. A further 4 lines achieved the 10% target.
 - Social Media (Twitter contact) saw a 5% increase with 45,241 tweets received between July - September 2020, compared with 42,952 for the same period in 2019. This continues to demonstrate citizen's appetite to use other contact channels for service enquiries and aligns with the Council's digital transformation goals.
- 4.6 Complaint levels remain comparatively low, with complaints recorded against Contact Centre activity continuing to equate to less than 1% of calls handled by the Contact Centre in the reporting period. The Contact Centre continues to work closely with relevant Council services to ensure that accurate service commitments and expectations are given to citizens.

Ongoing Projects and Improvement Activities

- 4.7 The Scottish Welfare fund (SWF) service level has improved over the current reporting period despite a huge increase in demand. The team has continued to deliver an effective service during the pandemic, processing 8096 applications, an 76% increase when compared with the same period in 2019. This increase is attributable to the social and economic impact of COVID and the proactive promotion of the Fund.
- 4.8 Day to day operations in the Repairs Direct team have been significantly impacted by COVID-19. Although the team experienced a drop-in call volume due to the service moving to a critical only repair offering, 17,713 calls still presented on the main Repairs line in the reporting period.
- 4.9 In June 2020 the Repairs Direct Team absorbed the Annual Gas Servicing calls for Housing Property, as part of a wider efficiency initiative. This phone line has been extremely active with 5156 inbound calls, 2593 emails and 16,680 outbound calls during June to September 2020.
- 4.10 In recent months contact volumes have continued to rise as the service reopens to normal activities. During this period the team has continued to work on the Total Mobile improvement project to align with Housing Repairs return to full service in October 2020.
- 4.11 The General Enquiries line handled 24,033 calls, an increase of 7000 calls in the same reporting period in 2019. The reflects the increased contact from citizens seeking advice on wider Council services. This number is expected to reduce with the reopening of all major contact lines.
- 4.12 The closure of Libraries during the pandemic resulted in close working with the Improvement Service to deliver an online portal for new 60+ bus passes and Young Scot applications. This initiative has been a success and the Improvement Service is aiming to launch concessionary travel for people with disabilities, followed by a Young Scot photo card and renewal and replacement cards later in the year.
- 4.13 Contact teams based in the Council's locality offices have played a pivotal role in supporting the Council's Critical Response Centres (CRC). This has ensured appropriate face to face services have been supported, as well as outbound calls and 8,000 emails via the locality email accounts. Since changing to the CRC model, for the period April to September 2020, 5783 citizens have made use of these critical services. In addition, alternative contact arrangements have been put in place for thousands of other citizens.
- 4.14 The Contact team supported the Garden Waste registration during the current reporting period. As a result of COVID-19 restrictions, registration was available by phone or online. This registration period saw 90% of registrations processed online with the remaining 10% through the dedicated phone line.
- 4.15 The Customer team is committed to maximising the use of technology to improve the customer experience and provide greater service choices. The Verint customer platform is pivotal to this activity and supports a range of online forms for services including Parking, Licensing and Planning and Building Standards. This work is

continuing and will deliver further back office system integration to help effectively manage customer contact.

- 4.16 The Council utilised the CRM platform to develop various applications that supported its response to COVID-19. The flexibility of the system was a vital component in coordinating data and service requests from shielded and vulnerable customers, as well as individuals instructed to self-isolate. This ensured critical services were provided efficiently and timeously at a time when service capacity was under pressure.
- 4.17 Work has been completed to simplify the sign in process for customers accessing the Council's online services. This has made reporting, requesting and paying on the Council's website simpler and quicker. The 'Mygovscot' registration is now optional for many services, providing greater flexibility for residents and businesses who are using our online services. Citizens who still wish to keep a record of their transaction in their online account can choose to sign in to their mygovscot myaccount, as they have done in the past. If they choose not to use their mygovscot myaccount, the transaction will be processed as normal and the Council will hold a record of the transaction, but it won't be saved to the citizen's online account. This change is designed to address customer feedback that registration had been a barrier to service access and the new process is designed to be easier and faster.
- 4.18 Several changes have also been applied to the automatic e-mails generated by the platform to improve the overall customer experience. These include:
- Council branding;
 - functionality to allow the email notifications to be more easily updated; and
 - details of the location request/report to make it easier for customers to identify which issue the email relates to.
- 4.19 These new features are part of the Customer team's ongoing commitment to deliver simple and easy to access online services.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Performance will continue to be reviewed against target to ensure issues are addressed and service level improvements are achieved.
- 5.2 The use of technology continues to play an important role and we will continue to implement technology and systems throughout 2020 to better improve the citizen experience and to help achieve further saving targets.
- 5.3 The use of new technology will allow the Contact Centre to continue to operate a blended model of office and home working to build service resilience.
- 5.4 Phase 2 of the improvement programme will build on a range of service initiatives, including fully utilising existing technology and ensuring it is effectively integrated with further system/processes to deliver a better service experience for our customers. Activities include:

- Planning and Building Standards – pre planning applications
- Emergency and non-emergency Council home repairs
- Full integration of bulky uplifts
- Online Shared Repairs Service
- Online access to Council rent
- Integration with social media and telephony systems
- Creation of service knowledge base to support internal service delivery and cross skilling within the Contact team

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The Contact Team is projected to deliver efficiency savings within 2020/21 and this will be achieved through greater self-service, a rationalised cash collection operation, improved call handling and a related organisational review. Where appropriate and subject to a comprehensive integrated impact assessment, predominately online activities will be considered for appropriate services, e.g. interaction with businesses.

7. Stakeholder/Community 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 and call-based options. This blend continues to be reviewed in light of the ongoing pandemic.
- 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.
- 7.3 The Customer team uses a broad range of feedback and citizen groups to support service development and improvement.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [Customer Performance Update July - September 2019 - Report to Policy and Sustainability Committee, November 2019](#)
- 8.2 [Customer Performance Update April - June 2019 - Report to Policy and Sustainability Committee, August 2019](#)
- 8.3 [Customer Performance Update January – March 2019 - Report to Corporate, Policy and Strategy, May 2019](#)

- 8.4 [Customer Performance Update October - December 2018 - Report to Corporate, Policy and Strategy, February 2019](#)

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Customer Centre Performance Data

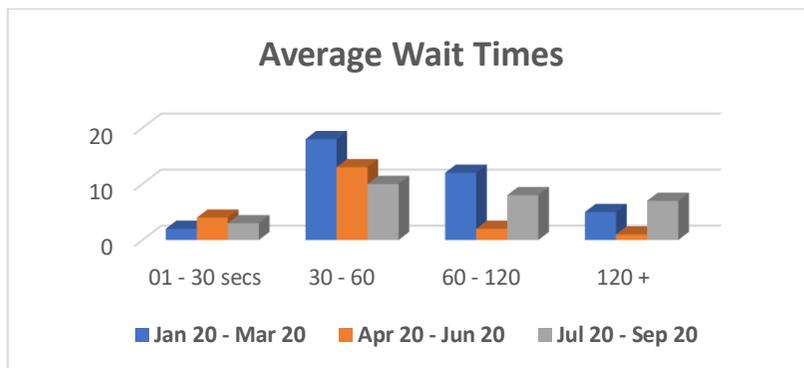
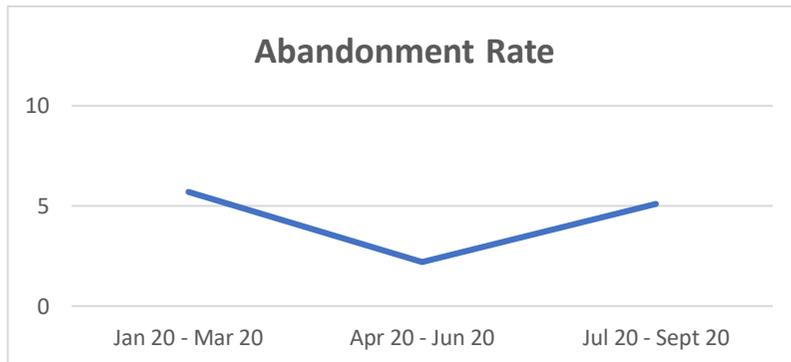
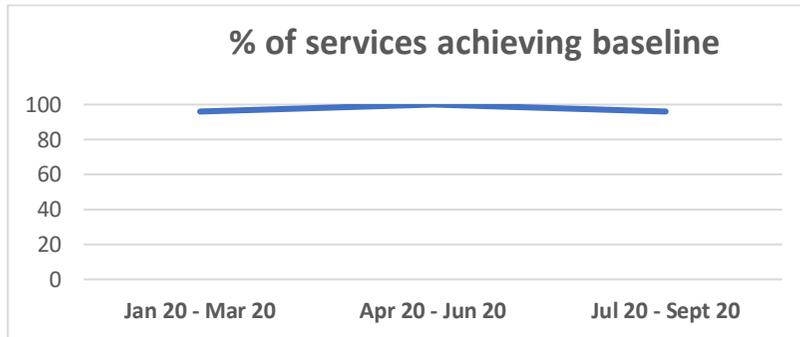
Contact Centre - Performance Data

Contact Activity & Timescale	% Calls answered within 60 seconds SLA target of 60%			Trend Apr – Jun 20 / Jul – Sep 20	Abandonment target – not exceed 10%, with a stretch target of 8%				Trend Apr – Jun 20 / Jul – Sep 20	Average Wait Times			
	Jan – Mar 20	Apr – Jun 20	Jul – Sep 20		Jan – Mar 20	Apr – Jun 20	Jul – Sep 20	Total Calls Handled Jul – Sep 20		Jan – Mar 20	Apr – Jun 20	Jul – Sep 20	Trend Jan – Mar 20 / Apr – Jun 20
Anti-Social Behaviour	100%				0%			0					
Central Emergency Serv	71%	84%	75%	▼	6.7%	3.5%	7.2%	6025	▲	01:20	00:39	01:19	▲
C & F Professional Child	67%	76%	61%	▼	9.8%	3.5%	8.9%	901	▲	01:21	00:55	01:33	▲
C & F Public Child	63%	70%	61%	▼	9.7%	3.7%	7.2%	2038	▲	01:36	00:55	01:31	▲
SCD Emergency Clarence	83%	80%	81%	▲	2.8%	3.6%	3.6%	159		00:41	00:40	00:41	▲
Council Tax	68%	86%	64%	▼	4.8%	1.3%	8.7%	16732	▲	01:48	00:35	02:41	▲
Benefits	65%	87%	66%	▼	3.3%	0.6%	2.9%	4586	▲	02:03	00:39	02:20	▲
NDR	63%		61%		3.1%		2.0%	251		02:00		02:38	
Customer Care	79%				2.9%			0		00:43			
Food Bank	61%	80%	71%	▼	9.4%	3.5%	6.2%	1381	▲	02:24	00:49	01:29	▲
Emergency Home Care	87%	87%	84%	▼	8.5%	9%	9.3%	5186	▲	00:37	00:30	00:45	▲
Emergency Home Care	80%	91%	82%	▼	5.7%	3.8%	6.6%	733	▲	00:43	00:19	00:42	▲
Emergency Social Work	83%	88%	71%	▼	6.5%	3.8%	16%	205	▲	00:40	00:34	01:20	▲
ITS Daytime	89%				4.7%			0		00:25			
1 Edinburgh	71%				6.4%			0		01:04			
Repairs Direct	43%	72%	77%	▲	15.2%	5.8%	4.0%	17005	▲	04:10	01:27	01:00	▼
Repairs Planners	91%	99%	97%	▼	2.5%	0.4%	1.2%	3817	▲	00:17	00:09	00:10	▲
SCD Professional Adult	71%	89%	72%	▼	5.2%	5%	6.4%	615	▲	00:52	00:43	01:01	▲
SCD Public Adult	60%	72%	60%	▼	10.7%	7%	12.9%	9714	▲	01:59	01:21	02:10	▲
Scottish Welfare Fund	62%	97%	86%	▼	5.2%	0.4%	1.3%	5172	▲	02:17	00:19	00:50	▲
Repairs - Tradesman	67%	80%	82%	▲	7.3%	4.8%	4.3%	5821	▼	01:15	00:40	00:36	▼
Waste Special Uplifts	73%		82%		1.5%		2.1%	92		01:09		00:49	
Waste	73%		75%		2%		1.4%	183		00:52		01:07	
Environment	71%		61%		2.4%		7.7%	301		01:10		02:26	
FM Helpdesk	82%		89%		8.3%		4.9%	1333		00:31		00:21	
Building Standards	70%				4%			0		01:08			
Planning	69%				4.1%			0		01:04			
PBS Building Payments	82%		63%		3.6%		9%	284		00:38		01:39	
North East Locality	70%				7.2%			0		00:52			
North West Locality	72%				5.9%			0		00:51			
South East Locality	72%				6.8%			0		00:52			
South West Locality	71%				5.8%			0		00:54			
Supply Hub	78%		79%		13.7%		14.1%	383		00:34		00:28	
Debt Services	63%				5%			0		00:53			
Garden Waste	78%		42%		2.1%		25.4%	7713		00:59		04:43	
Library Enquiries	79%				4.8%			0		00:38			
General Enquiries	80%	91%	82%	▼	4.7%	2.2%	3.4%	24033	▲	00:36	00:23	00:37	▲
Shielding		83%	84%	▲		2.6%	5.9%	2023	▲		00:48	00:54	▲
Vulnerable		80%	79%	▼		4.5%	6.1%	1394	▲		00:57	00:53	▼
Annual Gas Servicing		67%	67%	↔		21.9%	19.8%	4134	▼		02:07	02:14	▲

Shading highlight lines that were partially closed during the reporting period or linked to new service delivery.

Contact Centre Performance Overview

Performance Measures



Commentary

- 28 lines open during the COVID restrictions covering reporting period July – September 2020.
 - 122,214 calls were handled during Jul – Sept 2020.
 - 27 out of 28 lines met or exceeded service in the period July - September 2020
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- The Contact Centre is answering 94.9% of all calls received. This is based on 28 lines open and a blended approach of home and office working.
 - 19 out of 28 lines achieved the 8% stretch target. A further 4 achieved the 10% target.
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- Average wait times increased during the current reporting period compared to the previous quarter. This is a result of supporting additional workstreams, reallocating resource to support critical service and dealing with more complex queries as services across the Council reopen.