

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 23 February 2021

Contact Centre Performance: October - December 2020

Item number	
Routine	Routine
Wards	All
Council Commitments	

1. Recommendations

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes:

- the current performance trends within the Contact Centre;
- ongoing improvement activities to ensure that Council services are accessible and citizen queries and complaints are dealt with effectively; and,
- service delivery changes that have been implemented in response to COVID-19 restrictions.

Stephen S. Moir

Executive Director of Resources

Contact: Nicola Harvey, Head of Customer and Digital Services,
Customer and Digital Services Division, Resources Directorate

E-mail: nicola.harvey@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 469 5006

Report

Contact Centre Performance: October - December 2020

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The report details Contact Centre performance for October to December 2020 and outlines associated service improvement activities, as well as changes to service delivery because of COVID-19 restrictions.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Police and Sustainability Committee receives quarterly updates on Contact Centre performance, trends and ongoing service improvement activities. This report focuses on the reporting period October–December 2020. The data is based on our call performance target of 60% of calls answered within 60 seconds, as approved by the Committee in August 2018.

4. Main report

Overview

- 4.1 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, web chat and chat bot functionality.

Current Trends and Service Performance

- 4.2 The Contact Centre continue to operate new ways of working because of COVID-19 restrictions. These activities have ensured that critical lines remained open from March 2020. New functionality which was introduced has enabled the Contact Centre to incrementally expand contact activities and this was aligned with the Council's wider service recovery. By October 2020 all of the Council's main customer service and query contact lines were operational. This level of service operation requires the Contact Centre to operate a blended home working and office-based working.

- 4.3 Throughout 2020 the Contact Team has supported a range of additional COVID-19 related support functions which the Council was required to undertake by the Scottish Government and as part of our local response arrangements for Edinburgh. This includes support for shielded and vulnerable citizens, financial support through benefit advice and crisis grants and ongoing support for those self-isolating. The shielding and vulnerable phone lines continued to operate during the reporting period and staff were reallocated from across the Contact team to support this critical service. The team handled 2,141 calls and 177 emails during the period October to December 2020 from shielded and vulnerable individuals, providing guidance and support to these residents across Edinburgh. The team also carried out over 4,364 outbound welfare calls during the same period, in-line with national guidance.
- 4.4 These initiatives continue to create additional resourcing and logistical pressures for the Transactions and Contact teams in Customer and Digital Services. These are managed through dynamic workforce management plans and the use of our rostering and scheduling workforce planning solution.
- 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 October to December 2020 were 137,640. This reflects a 12% increase from the previous quarterly reporting period and reflects the material move to opening up more business as usual activities. These volumes represent the busiest reporting period since the start of lockdown. For comparison 165,465 calls were answered in the same reporting period in 2019.
 - 85% of lines open during October to December 2020 met or exceed the service level of answering 60% of calls within 60 seconds.
 - 25 of 34 lines achieved the stretch target of 8% in the current reporting period. A further 5 lines achieved the 10% target.
 - Social Media (Twitter contact) saw a reduction in volumes with 33,460 tweets received between October-December 2020, compared with 36,546 for the same period in 2019. Volumes, however, continue to demonstrate citizen appetite to use other contact channels for service enquiries, which align with the Council's Citizen Digital Enablement (CDE) programme.
- 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 largest complaint theme related to service failure. The Contact Centre team continues to work closely with all relevant Council services to ensure that accurate service commitments and expectations are given to citizens, with complaint volumes reducing month on month in the current reporting period.

Ongoing Projects and Improvement Activities

- 4.7 The Scottish Welfare fund (SWF) service level has been maintained during the reporting period despite a huge increase in demand. During this reporting period the team processed 8794 applications, an 94% 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 with the team paying out £1,367,128.25 compared to £673,273.92 for the same period in 2019.
- 4.8 As a result of COVID-19 the Scottish Welfare Fund team has also been managing the Scottish Government's Self-Isolations grants process, handling 371 inbound calls in the current reporting period and processing 484 online applications. The team paid out £135,000 to the citizens of Edinburgh.
- 4.9 Day to day operations in the Repairs Direct team have been significantly impacted by COVID-19. During October 2020 the Housing Repairs service returned to operating a full service and handled 20,830 calls on the Repairs Direct line. The team have also handled 24,0636 outbound calls and 8733 emails.
- 4.10 As part of our ongoing improvement programme the Repairs Direct team have introduced a non-emergency online form to enable Tenants to have an alternative channel to raise requests for work. The form went live in October, with 2,405 online forms submitted in the current reporting period. The team, in conjunction with the Housing Repairs service will continue to promote this form in line with the relevant COVID restrictions.
- 4.11 The General Enquiries line handled 23,793 calls during the period October – December 2020. This is an 83% increase on calls handled in the same reporting period in 2019. The reflects the increased contact from citizens seeking advice on wider Council services.
- 4.12 Call volumes handled by the Waste service reduced during the current reporting period, however, we have started to see a change in citizen behaviours in how the engage with this area of the business. The Waste telephone line has a user-friendly Interactive Voice Response (IVR) which is seeing 67% of citizens self-serving through the IVR with no need to speak to an agent. Uptake on the online forms is increasing year on year with a 56% increase on volumes recorded in the current reporting period in 2020 compared to that of the same period in 2019.
- 4.13 Council Tax, Benefits and Debt Services have experienced significant pressure and service levels have been impacted as a result of the volume of reminders issued to residents (33,342 – October, 28,779 – November and 8558 December). Through multi skilling, the team have also been supporting the increased contact within the Scottish Welfare Fund team.
- 4.14 The initial closure of Libraries during the pandemic resulted in a close working with the Improvement Service and the early adoption of an online portal for the new 60+ bus passes, Young Scot applications and disabled concessionary travel. This has been a success and the Improvement Service is aiming to launch the Young Scot photo card and renewal and replacement cards in 2021. During the current reporting period, 973 applications have successfully been processed online which is 51% of all applications submitted.

- 4.15 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 support services, as well as supporting outbound calls and handling 3,279 emails via the locality e-mail accounts. For the reporting period October to December 2020, 6,459 citizens have made use of these critical services with 2,269 of these citizens being signposted to appropriate contact channels. In addition, alternative contact arrangements have been put in place for thousands of other citizens.
- 4.16 The Customer Contact and Transactions teams are committed to using technology to improve the citizen experience and provide greater service choice. The Council's customer platform (Verint) now supports a range of online forms for services including: Parking; Planning and Building Standards; and, Network Management and Enforcement services. This ongoing work will deliver further "back office" systems integration to help effectively manage contact arrangements.
- 4.17 The Council has utilised the platform to develop various applications to support the 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.
- 4.18 The Team has simplified the sign in process for citizens 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. Residents 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 to not 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.
- 4.19 The team is also considering various options around customer authentication and single view of the customer, and these will be progressed in 2021. A range of service projects are also continuing which will improve the customer journey:
- Full integration of bulky uplifts
 - Development of knowledge base within the CRM
 - Online payment functionality using gov.pay
- 4.20 These new features are part of the ongoing commitment from the Customer and Digital Services Division to deliver simpler and easier 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 2021 to better improve the citizen experience and to help achieve further saving targets.
- 5.3 The use of new technology will enable the Contact Centre to continue to operate a blended model of office and home working to build service resilience. Future reports to the Policy and Sustainability Committee will start detailing volumes for alternative channels of contact during 2021, to provide a more rounded view of citizen contact.
- 5.4 The Citizen Digital Enablement (CDE) programme will continue to 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. 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; and,
 - 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 Customer Contact 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 January – September 2020 Report to Policy and Sustainability Committee, December 2020](#)
- 8.2 [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

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Contact Centre - Performance Data and Performance Overview

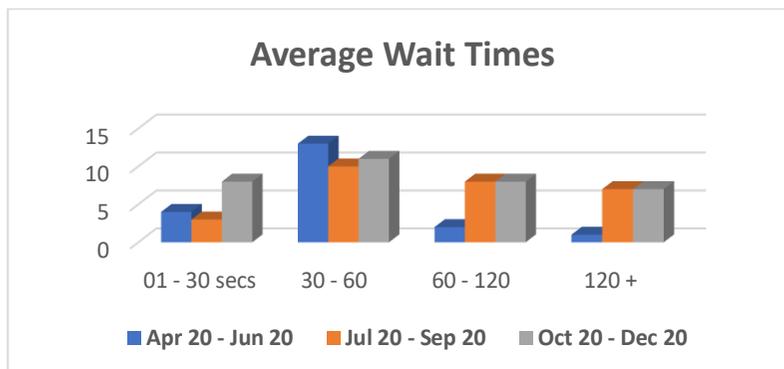
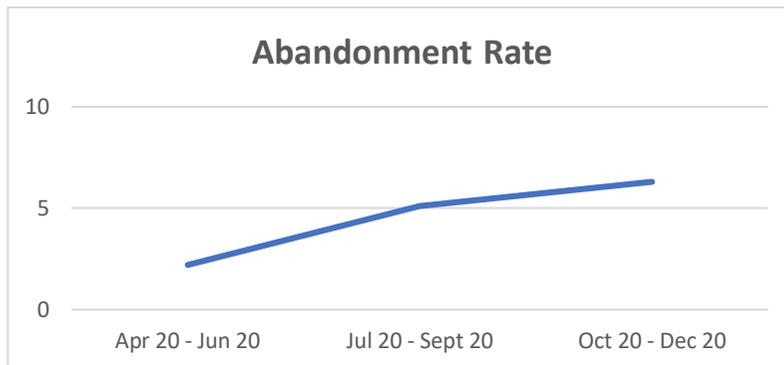
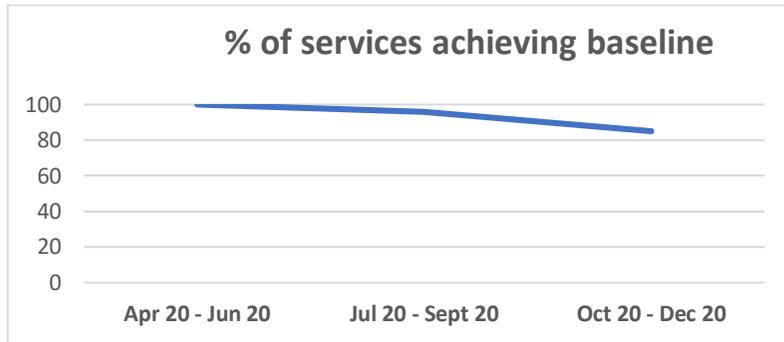
Contact Centre - Performance Data

Contact Activity & Timescale	% Calls answered within 60 seconds SLA target of 60%			Trend Jul – Sep 20 / Oct – Dec 20	Abandonment target – not exceed 10%, with a stretch target of 8%					Average Wait Times			
	Apr – Jun 20	Jul – Sep 20	Oct – Dec 20		Apr – Jun 20	Jul – Sep 20	Oct – Dec 20	Total Calls Handled Oct - Dec 20	Trend Jul – Sep 20 / Oct – Dec 20	Apr – Jun 20	Jul – Sep 20	Oct – Dec 20	Trend Apr – Jun 20 / Oct – Dec 20
Central Emergency Serv	84%	75%	76%	▲	3.5%	7.2%	4.6%	6973	▼	00:39	01:19	01:05	▼
C & F Professional Child	76%	61%	57%	▼	3.5%	8.9%	11.7%	1007	▲	00:55	01:33	02:05	▲
C & F Public Child	70%	61%	60%	▼	3.7%	7.2%	9.3%	1950	▲	00:55	01:31	01:45	▲
SCD Emergency Clarence	80%	81%	87%	▲	3.6%	3.6%	2.5%	159	▼	00:40	00:41	00:27	▼
			80%				5.3%	1438				00:46	
Council Tax	86%	64%	35%	▼	1.3%	8.7%	13.3%	22430	▲	00:35	02:41	07:22	▲
Benefits	87%	66%	58%	▼	0.6%	2.9%	4.3%	4128	▲	00:39	02:20	03:31	▲
NDR		61%	71%	▲		2.0%	2.2%	862	▲		02:38	02:05	▼
Food Bank	80%	71%	68%	▼	3.5%	6.2%	9.1%	1488	▲	00:49	01:29	01:37	▲
Emergency Home Care	87%	84%	79%	▼	9%	9.3%	8.4%	689	▼	00:30	00:45	00:50	▲
Emergency Home Care	91%	82%	82%	↔	3.8%	6.6%	7.1%	4774	▼	00:19	00:42	00:44	▲
Emergency Social Work	88%	71%	77%	▲	3.8%	16%	7.5%	196	▼	00:34	01:20	01:00	▼
1 Edinburgh			76%				6.4%	3216				01:00	
Repairs Direct	72%	77%	76%	▼	5.8%	4.0%	3.9%	20830	▼	01:27	01:00	01:15	▲
Repairs Planners	99%	97%	89%	▼	0.4%	1.2%	3.9%	7403	▲	00:09	00:10	00:23	▲
SCD Professional Adult	89%	72%	76%	▲	5%	6.4%	4%	593	▼	00:43	01:01	00:50	▼
SCD Public Adult	72%	60%	69%	▲	7%	12.9%	9%	8458	▼	01:21	02:10	01:30	▼
Scottish Welfare Fund	97%	86%	70%	▼	0.4%	1.3%	3.7%	4373	▲	00:19	00:50	02:03	▲
Repairs - Tradesman	80%	82%	83%	▲	4.8%	4.3%	3.1%	8099	▼	00:40	00:36	00:34	▼
Waste Special Uplifts		82%	80%	▼		2.1%	1.8%	758	▼		00:49	01:05	▲
Waste		75%	89%	▲		1.4%	0.9%	1120	▼		01:07	00:25	▼
Environment		61%	85%	▲		7.7%	1.3%	813	▼		02:26	00:59	▼
FM Helpdesk		89%	84%	▼		4.9%	7.3%	1931	▲		00:21	00:33	▲
Building Standards			80%				0.5%	589				00:41	
Planning			83%				1.4%	206				00:42	
PBS Building Payments		63%	86%	▲		9%	1.9%	207	▼		01:39	00:22	▼
Supply Hub		79%	82%	▲		14.1%	14.7%	395	▲		00:28	00:26	▼
Debt Services			45%				13.6%	3164				02:14	
Garden Waste		42%	91%	▲		25.4%	1.4%	1456	▼		00:43	00:21	▼
General Enquiries	91%	82%	85%	▲	2.2%	3.4%	2.4%	23793	▼	00:23	00:37	00:28	▼
Shielding	83%	84%	83%	▼	2.6%	5.9%	1.9%	53	▼	00:48	00:54	00:26	▼
Vulnerable	80%	79%	79%	↔	4.5%	6.1%	3.7%	2088	▼	00:57	00:53	00:42	▼
Annual Gas Servicing	67%	67%	87%	▲	21.9%	19.8%	4.7%	1630	▼	02:07	02:14	00:50	▼
Self-Isolation Payments			69%				9.1%	371				02:06	

N.B. shading highlights lines that were partially closed during the reporting period or linked to new service delivery.

Contact Centre Performance Overview

Performance Measures



Commentary

- 34 lines open during the reporting period October – December 2020.
- 137,640 calls were handled during October – December 2020.
- 30 out of 34 lines met or exceeded service in the period October-December 2020
- The Contact Centre is answering 93.7% of all calls received. This is based on 34 lines open and a blended approach of home and office working.
- 25 out of 34 lines achieved the 8% stretch target. A further 5 achieved the 10% target.
- 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.