

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 10 June 2021

Contact Centre Performance: January – March 2021

Item number	
Executive/Routine	Routine
Wards	All
Council Commitments	

1. Recommendations

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

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Report

Contact Centre Performance: January – March 2021

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The report details Contact Centre performance for January to March 2021 and outlines associated service improvement activities, as well as changes to service delivery because of COVID-19 restrictions and ongoing recovery action.

3. Background

- 3.1 Committee receives quarterly updates on Contact Centre performance, trends, and ongoing service improvement activities. This report focuses on the reporting period January to March 2021. The data is based on a call performance target of 60% of calls answered within 60 seconds, as agreed by 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 a blended home working and office-based model as a result of COVID restrictions. This model has proved successful with all services operational.
- 4.3 The Contact Team has continued to support a range of additional COVID related support functions. This includes support for shielding and vulnerable citizens, financial support through benefits and crisis grants and support for those self-isolating. The shielding and vulnerable phone lines continued to operate during the reporting period, and resource was redistributed from across the team to support these services. The team handled 2522 inbound calls and 211 emails during the period January to March 2021, providing guidance and support to Edinburgh

residents. The team also carried out over 5,441 outbound welfare calls during the same period.

- 4.4 These initiatives continue to create additional resourcing and logistical pressures for the processing and contact teams within Customer and are being managed through dynamic workforce management plans.
- 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 January to March 2021 was 141,346, a decrease from the same reporting period in 2020 where 183,762 calls were handled. The reduction in overall contact is down to services such as Housing Repairs operating an emergency only service during the current reporting period and citizens using alternative channels of contact;
 - 89% of lines met or exceed the service level of answering 60% of calls within 60 seconds during the current reporting period;
 - 30 of 37 lines achieved the stretch abandonment target of 8%; and,
 - Social Media (Twitter contact) saw an increase in volumes with 44,807 tweets received between January to March 2021, a 34% increase on volumes received in the last reporting period. Volumes across social media platforms continue to demonstrate citizen's appetite to use other contact channels for service enquiries. This aligns with the Council's Digital and Smart City Strategy.
- 4.6 Complaint levels remain comparatively low, with complaints recorded against Contact Centre activity equating to less than 1% of calls handled by the Contact Centre in the reporting period. The largest complaint theme relates to service failure. The Contact Centre team continues to work closely with relevant Council service areas to ensure that accurate service commitments, feedback and the clear management of expectations are given to service users with complaint volumes reducing month on month in the current reporting period.

Cash Handling – Local Offices

- 4.7 Following the successful removal of cash payments in six local offices in April 2019 (Kirkliston, South Queensferry, Pilton, Craigmillar, Captain's Road, and Drumbrae), the intention had been to remove this functionality from the remaining offices, 249 High Street and Wester Hailes in April 2020. As a result of the pandemic, no cash payments have been taken at 249 High Street or Wester Hailes over the last 12 months, with citizens making use of alternative payment method e.g. online, phone, PayPoint, Direct Debit, Standing orders etc. When the Council's local offices fully reopen, it is expected that there will be no cash payment service, as other methods of payment are available to customers and have been successfully supported and accessed since March 2020.

Ongoing Projects and Improvement Activities

- 4.8 The Scottish Welfare fund (SWF) service level has been maintained during the reporting period despite a continued increase in demand. During this reporting period the team processed 12,572 applications, an 83% increase when compared with the same period in 2020. This increase is attributable to the social and economic impact of COVID and the proactive promotion of the Fund with the team paying out £2,089,715.03 compared to £739,844.19 for the same period in 2020.
- 4.9 As a result of COVID the Scottish Welfare Fund team has also been managing the Scottish Government's Self-Isolation grant process, handling 667 inbound calls in the current reporting period and processing 994 online applications. The team has paid out £225k to Edinburgh citizens.
- 4.10 Day to day operations in the Repairs Direct team have been significantly impacted by COVID. During the current reporting period the service have been operating an emergency only service. Volumes have remained high with 17,649 inbound calls handled as well as 19,999 outbound calls and 4947 emails. The team has worked with Housing Property in readiness for the return to a full service in April 2021.
- 4.11 The General Enquiries line handled 26,174 calls during the period January to March 2021. This is an 96% increase on calls handled in the same reporting period in 2020. This reflects the increased contact from citizens seeking advice on wider Council services.
- 4.12 Call volumes across waste services remain stable with citizens utilising alternative contact channels - 67% of our citizens have self -served through the telephony call routing system (IVR), with a large proportion utilising online forms. 29,212 forms were processed for Garden Waste and New Bin requests in the current period.
- 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 in the current reporting period (63,221 issued compared to 31,825 issued in the same period in 2020). This reflects the different approach to Council Tax arrears that was adopted in 2020/21.
- 4.14 The Social Care Direct team has been augmented to tackle service pressures, with capacity added through multi skilling and a review of online contact activities. Further automation of online functionality is also being explored. The Social Care Direct has also supported shielding and vulnerable inbound calls due to the linked nature of the services.
- 4.15 Customer Contact has continued to work closely with the Improvement Service to support the rollout of the online portal for National Entitlement Cards and Bus Passes. Citizens can now process online applications for Disabled Concessionary Cards, 60+ Bus Pass and Young Scot cards with 970 applications processed in the current reporting period. Replacement cards and renewals are scheduled for rollout to the online platform in Q2 of 2021.
- 4.16 Contact teams continue to play 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 for citizens self-isolating, and handling 3665 emails via the locality email accounts. For the reporting period

January to March 2021, 3635 citizens made use of these critical services, with 1901 of these citizens being signposted to appropriate contact channels.

- 4.17 The Customer Team is committed to using technology to improve the customer experience and provide greater service choice. The Council's customer platform (Verint) now supports a range of online forms for services including Sheltered Housing, Bulky uplifts, Planning and Building Standards and Network Management and Enforcement services. This ongoing work will deliver further back office system integration to help effectively manage customer contact.
- 4.18 The Council utilised the platform to develop 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.
- 4.19 The team is now considering various customer authentication options and ways to promote a single view of the customer, and these will be progressed in 2021. A range of service projects are also ongoing, which will improve the customer journey:
- Fully integrated Housing Repairs service with online capability
 - Development of searchable service knowledge base, that can be accessed by customers and council staff.
 - Online payment functionality for key services
- 4.20 These new features are part of the Customer teams 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 new technology and systems will be implemented throughout 2021 to better improve the service user experience and help achieve further saving targets. Future Reports will detail alternative channel volumes to provide a rounded view of citizen contact.
- 5.3 The use of new technology will allow the Contact Centre to continue to operate a blended model of office and home working.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Operational savings were delivered through a leadership review in 2021 and no further organisational savings are expected at this time. The team will continue to drive efficiency within 2021/22 and this will be achieved through greater self-service, improved call handling skills and a multi skilling programme.

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 service users 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 will be reviewed in relation to 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 January - March 2019 - Report to Corporate, Policy and Strategy - May 2019](#)
- 8.2 [Customer Performance Update April - June 2019 - Report to Policy and Sustainability Committee - August 2019](#)
- 8.3 [Customer Performance Update July - September 2019 - Report to Policy and Sustainability Committee - November 2019](#)
- 8.4 [Customer Performance Update October - December 2019 - Report to Policy and Sustainability Committee - February 2020](#)
- 8.5 [Customer Performance Update January - September 2020 - Report to Policy and Sustainability Committee - December 2020](#)

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Customer Centre Performance Data

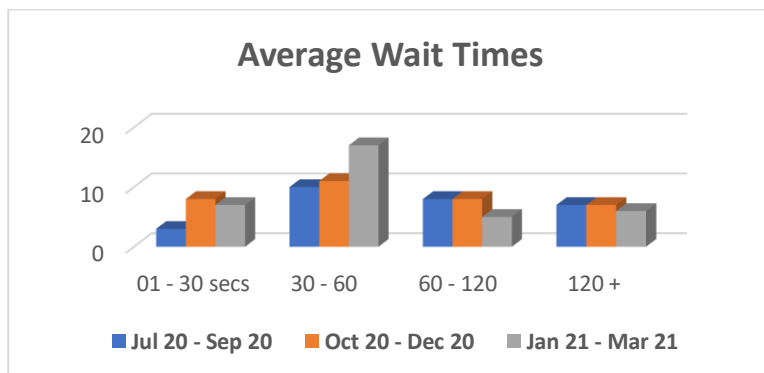
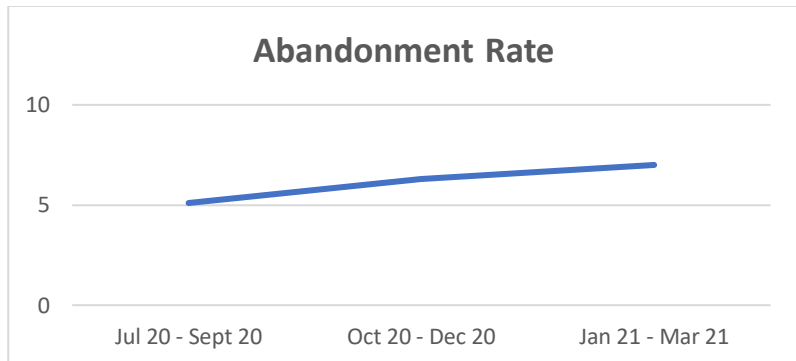
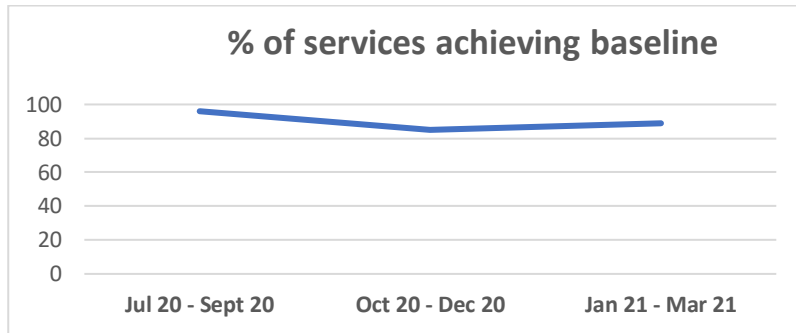
Contact Centre - Performance Data

Contact Activity & Timescale	% Calls answered within 60 seconds SLA target of 60%			Trend Oct – Dec 20 / Jan – Mar 21	Abandonment target – not exceed 10%, with a stretch target of 8%					Average Wait Times			
	Jul – Sep 20	Oct – Dec 20	Jan – Mar 21		Jul – Sep 20	Oct – Dec 20	Jan- Mar 21	Total Calls Handled Jan – Mar 21	Trend Oct – Dec 20 / Jan – Mar 21	Jul – Sep 20	Oct – Dec 20	Jan – Mar 21	Trend Oct – Dec 20 / Jan – Mar 21
Central Emergency Serv	75%	76%	76%	▲	7.2%	4.6%	5.1%	7747	▲	01:19	01:05	01:00	▼
C & F Professional Child	61%	57%	57%	↔	8.9%	11.7%	12.4%	763	▲	01:33	02:05	02:10	▲
C & F Public Child	61%	60%	54%	▼	7.2%	9.3%	10.8%	1716	▲	01:31	01:45	02:08	▲
SCD Emergency Clarence	81%	87%	85%	▼	3.6%	2.5%	3.3%	177	▲	00:41	00:27	00:38	▲
		80%	75%	▼		5.3%	4.7%	2197	▼		00:46	00:47	▲
Council Tax	64%	35%	34%	▼	8.7%	13.3%	15.6%	21099	▲	02:41	07:22	07:50	▲
Benefits	66%	58%	41%	▼	2.9%	4.3%	10.8%	4484	▲	02:20	03:31	06:44	▲
NDR	61%	71%	60%	▼	2.0%	2.2%	5.8%	2557	▲	02:38	02:05	04:38	▲
Food Bank	71%	68%	81%	▲	6.2%	9.1%	5%	1557	▼	01:29	01:37	00:46	▼
Emergency Home Care	84%	79%	82%	▲	9.3%	8.4%	5.9%	650	▼	00:45	00:50	00:40	▼
Emergency Home Care	82%	82%	81%	▼	6.6%	7.1%	7.8%	4854	▲	00:42	00:44	00:47	▲
Emergency Social Work	71%	77%	86%	▲	16%	7.5%	7.7%	216	▲	01:20	01:00	00:35	▼
1 Edinburgh		76%	67%	▼		6.4%	5.5%	2286	▼		01:00	01:08	▲
Repairs Direct	77%	76%	80%	▲	4.0%	3.9%	3.9%	17649	↔	01:00	01:15	00:57	▼
Repairs Planners	97%	89%	92%	▲	1.2%	3.9%	3.8%	3861	▼	00:10	00:23	00:18	▼
SCD Professional Adult	72%	76%	70%	▼	6.4%	4.0%	4.6%	579	▲	01:01	00:50	00:59	▲
SCD Public Adult	60%	69%	62%	▼	12.9%	9.0%	10.4%	8869	▲	02:10	01:30	01:47	▲
Scottish Welfare Fund	86%	70%	74%	▲	1.3%	3.7%	5.3%	4412	▲	00:50	02:03	02:13	▲
Repairs - Tradesman	82%	83%	87%	▲	4.3%	3.1%	3.7%	6243	▲	00:36	00:34	00:26	▼
Waste Special Uplifts	82%	80%	66%	▼	2.1%	1.8%	2.2%	628	▲	00:49	01:05	01:16	▲
Waste	75%	89%	76%	▼	1.4%	0.9%	1.4%	1279	▲	01:07	00:25	00:42	▲
Environment	61%	85%	76%	▼	7.7%	1.3%	0.7%	670	▼	02:26	00:59	00:51	▼
FM Helpdesk	89%	84%	89%	▲	4.9%	7.3%	4%	1504	▼	00:21	00:33	00:23	▼
Building Standards		80%	75%	▼		0.5%	2.2%	571	▲		00:41	00:53	▲
Planning		83%	77%	▼		1.4%	2.8%	342	▲		00:42	00:50	▲
PBS Building Payments	63%	86%	87%	▲	9%	1.9%	2.8%	141	▲	01:39	00:22	00:29	▲
Supply Hub	79%	82%	77%	▼	14.1%	14.7%	17.6%	155	▲	00:28	00:26	00:15	▼
Debt Services		45%	66%	▲		13.6%	7.4%	2518	▼		02:14	00:52	▼
Garden Waste	42%	91%	74%	▼	25.4%	1.4%	3.8%	1496	▲	00:43	00:21	01:04	▲
General Enquiries	82%	85%	85%	↔	3.4%	2.4%	3.3%	26174	▲	00:37	00:28	00:26	▼
Shielding	84%	83%	72%	▼	5.9%	1.9%	6.3%	1588	▲	00:54	00:26	00:57	▲
Vulnerable	79%	79%	78%	▼	6.1%	3.7%	4%	934	▲	00:53	00:42	00:45	▲
Annual Gas Servicing	67%	87%	92%	▲	19.8%	4.7%	2.5%	1975	▼	02:14	00:50	00:29	▼
Self-Isolation Payments		69%	70%	▲		9.1%	7.9%	667	▼		02:06	01:40	▼
Locality Lines			82%				4%	5028				00:31	
Homelessness			85%				4.9%	1380				00:34	
Licensing Payments			67%				11.5%	2176				01:55	

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

Contact Centre Performance Overview

Performance Measures



Commentary

- 37 lines reported during the reporting period January – March 2021.
 - 141,346 calls were handled during January – March 2021.
 - 33 out of 37 lines met or exceeded service in the period January – March 2021.
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- The Contact Centre answered 93% of all calls received. This is based on 37 lines open and a blended approach of home and office working.
 - 30 lines achieved the 8% stretch 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.
 - Longer wait times (over 120 seconds) however reduced when compared with previous period.