

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 30 November 2021

Contact Centre Performance: April - September 2021

Item number	
Routine	Routine
Wards	All
Council Commitments	

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that 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: April - September 2021

2. Executive Summary

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

3. Background

- 3.1 Committee receives regular updates on Contact Centre performance, trends, and ongoing service improvement activities. This report focuses on the reporting period April - September 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 Team in Corporate Services 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 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 Team continue to operate a blended home working and office-based model as a result of COVID-19 building restrictions. This model has proved to be a success with services remaining operational and staff benefiting from an improved work life balance.
- 4.3 The Contact Team continues to support additional COVID related support functions. This includes support for shielding and vulnerable citizens, financial support through benefits and crisis grants and ongoing support for those self-isolating.
- 4.4 The Covid support line operated throughout the reporting period but following national guidance the dedicated Shielding line closed on 23 April 2021. These lines were resourced by existing Social Care Direct staff and handled 3109 inbound calls

and 663 emails during the period April - September 2021, providing guidance and support to residents across Edinburgh. An additional team also carried out over 14,800 outbound welfare calls to isolating citizens and 6971 welfare texts. These initiatives have continued to create additional resourcing and logistical pressures for the processing and contact teams in Customer and Digital Services. These 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 July to September 2021 was 148,010, a 21% increase from the same reporting period in 2020 where 122,214 calls were handled. This reflects the widespread reopening of services in 2021.
- 70% of lines met or exceed the service level of answering 60% of calls within 60 seconds during the period July – September 2021.
- 24 of 37 lines achieved the call stretch target of 8% in the current period.
- Social Media (Twitter contact) received 41,597 tweets between July – September 2021, which remains consistent against each reporting period. Volumes across our social media platform, continue 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 continue to 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 relevant Council services to ensure that accurate service commitments are provided to citizens with complaint volumes reducing month on month in the current reporting period.

Service Overview, Projects and Improvement Activities

4.7 Service level for the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) was achieved during the reporting period despite a material increase in demand. During the reporting period of July to September 2021, the team processed 7,000 crisis applications, a 9% 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 £492k compared to £304k for the same period in 2020.

4.8 The Scottish Welfare Fund team has also been responsible for managing the Scottish Government's Self-Isolations grants process, handling 3363 inbound calls in the reporting period July – September and processing 7515 online applications. The team paid out £2.1m to the citizens of Edinburgh. This area of work has been the team's primary focus. Given the consistently high levels of demand the size of the team has recently been increased again and multiskilling undertaken across the wider Contact to support processing levels throughout the remainder of 2021/22.

- 4.9 The day to day operations in the Repairs Direct team have been significantly impacted by COVID. During the current reporting period the service returned to a business as usual service, which generated increased contact as previously paused activities were restarted. Contact volumes remained high with 18,501 inbound calls handled in July – September 2021. The team also supported high levels of email contact and customer follow up and queries relating to ongoing repairs. The Contact Team continue to work closely with colleagues in the Housing Service to deliver the Housing Improvement Programme and enhance the customer journey. This includes the delivery of an online process that will automate repair requests directly to the Housing Service. Given the high volume of contact projected during the winter months and an ongoing commitment to improve the customer experience a recruitment exercise is also ongoing.
- 4.10 Call volumes across waste services remain stable with citizens utilising alternative contact channels, with 64% of citizens self-serving through the telephony system and a large proportion also utilising the online forms.
- 4.11 The Garden Waste summer registration period ran between 22 July and 1 September 2021. 7550 calls were handled during the registration window which resulted in 7% of subscription, with 93% of subscriptions made online. This was an increase on the 2020 Summer registration window.
- 4.12 Council Tax and Benefits teams experienced significant pressure and service levels were impacted. These pressures were a result of national welfare changes and the restarting of normal Council Tax recovery processes. As well as further recruitment resource has been drawn from across the Customer Services team to support these critical services. Workforce planning activities have included transferring benefit calls to the Transactions Team. This has allowed multi skilled staff in Contact to support the increased contact generated by Scottish Welfare Fund and self-isolation payments.
- 4.13 Contact teams based in the Council's locality offices continued to play a pivotal role in supporting the Council's Critical Response Centres (CRC). This ensured appropriate face to face services were provided, supported outbound calls for citizens self-isolating, whilst handling over 10k locality-based email queries. For the reporting period April - September 2021, over 15,000 citizens made use of these critical services, with 5955 of these citizens being signposted to the most appropriate contact channels. In addition, alternative contact arrangements have been put in place for thousands of other citizens.
- 4.14 From 8 November 2021 the Council Resilience Centres will revert to Locality Offices. Effective controls will be in place to ensure staff safety, whilst continuing to expand face to face service provision. The service offering at 249 High Street will also change in November 2021 and this will address the specific needs of the services that operate from the building.
- 4.15 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 transactions, including forms that allow customers to submit and pay for licensing applications. The Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme and P1 school registration forms have been migrated to the

Verint platform with additional functional improvements made to these transactions to improve the customer journey. Work is ongoing to deliver further online service access whilst also improving back office system integration to help effectively manage contact and improve the customer experience.

4.16 A range of service projects are also continuing, or due to progress during 2021/22 which will improve the customer journey:

- Fully integrated Housing Repairs form
- Extending online payment functionality to wider services
- Streamlining customer authentication process to create a simple sign on process
- Comprehensive customer satisfaction measurement process to assist service improvement activities
- Searchable service knowledge base that will address queries and questions. This has the potential to be used by Council teams and citizens
- Develop management information datasets to measure levels of engagement, response times and identify areas for service improvement
- Ongoing engagement with stakeholder groups, including Age Scotland to address issue of digital exclusion

4.17 These activities are part of the Customer and Digital Services ongoing commitment to deliver simple and easy to access 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 2021/22 to improve the citizen experience.

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.

5.4 The Customer 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.

6. Financial impact

6.1 The Contact Team completed an organisational review in April 2021. No further direct financial changes are expected or planned in 2021/22. The team will continue to drive efficiency measures, achieved through appropriate self-service, improved call handling and a multi skilling programme. Where appropriate and subject to a comprehensive integrated impact assessment to ensure that inclusion is fully factored in, further online activities will be considered for appropriate services, e.g. interaction with businesses.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The Council continues to progress a primarily digital by design approach, subject to appropriate impact assessment, to ensure that all residents 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 also ensures that channels remain accessible and do not create digital exclusion.
- 7.2 As the Council's contact offering develops and matures consideration will be given as how best to further encourage, support and improve uptake of both self-service and online transactional options, enabled by automation where appropriate.
- 7.3 The Customer Team uses a broad range of feedback and resident 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 October - December 2019 - Report to Policy and Sustainability Committee, February 2020](#)
- 8.3 [Customer Performance Update January – September 2020 Report to Policy and Sustainability Committee, December 2020](#)
- 8.4 [Customer Performance Update October - December 2020 Report to Policy and Sustainability Committee, February 2021](#)
- 8.5 [Customer Performance Update January - March 2021 Report to Policy and Sustainability Committee, June 2021](#)

9. Appendices

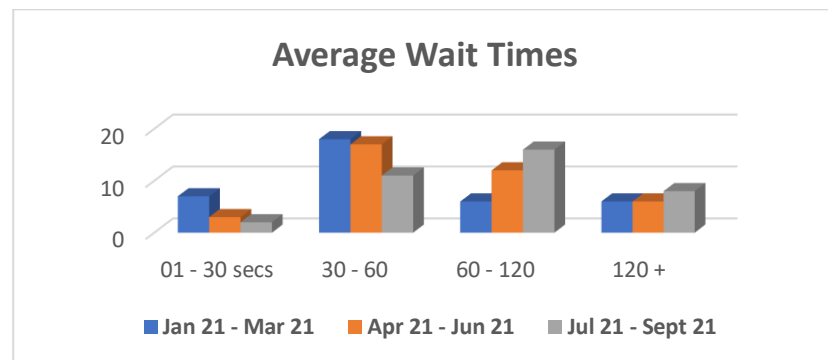
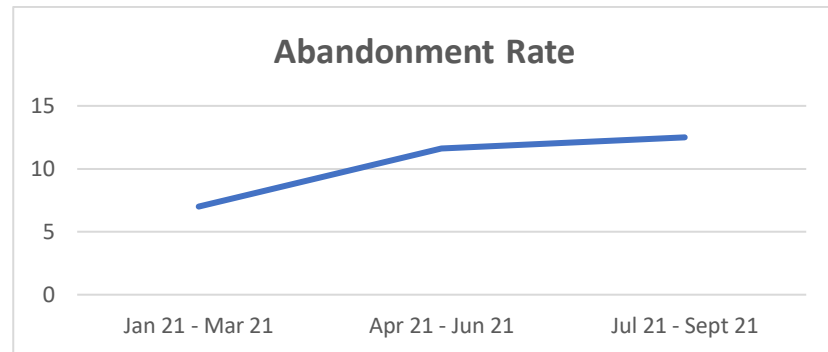
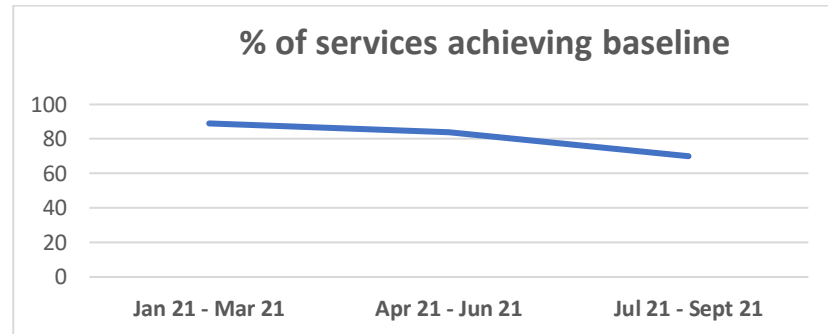
- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Customer Centre Performance Data

Contact Centre – Performance: Data April to September 2021

Contact Activity & Timescale	% Calls answered within 60 seconds SLA target of 60%			Trend Apr – Jun 21 / Jul – Sep – Mar 21	Abandonment target – not exceed 10%, with a stretch target of 8%					Trend Apr – Jun 21 / Jul – Sep – Mar 21	Average Wait Times			Trend Apr – Jun 21 / Jul – Sep – Mar 21
	Jan – Mar 21	Apr – Jun 21	Jul – Sep 21		Jan – Mar 21	Apr – Jun 21	Jul – Sep 21	Total Calls Handled Jul - Sep 21	Jan – Mar 21		Apr – Jun 21	Jul – Sep 21		
Central Emergency Serv	76%	79%	74%	▼	5.1%	5%	8.6%	6567	▲	01:00	00:49	01:09	▲	
C & F Professional Child	57%	69%	71%	▲	12.4%	8.4%	7%	964	▼	02:10	01:19	01:09	▼	
C & F Public Child	54%	64%	63%	▼	10.8%	9.4%	7.7%	1919	▼	02:08	01:39	01:33	▼	
SCD Emergency	85%	78%	76%	▼	3.3%	5.7%	8%	160	▲	00:38	00:44	00:48	▲	
Clarence	75%	70%	63%	▼	4.7%	5.2%	7.1%	2439	▲	00:47	01:06	01:22	▲	
Council Tax	34%	14%	45%	▲	15.6%	25.5%	12.7%	23169	▼	07:50	14:23	06:43	▼	
Benefits	41%	46%	60%	▼	10.8%	7.1%	8%	2988	▲	06:44	05:03	03:01	▼	
NDR	60%	28%	65%	▲	5.8%	15.6%	3.9%	1422	▼	04:38	09:25	03:03	▼	
Food Bank	81%	80%	67%	▼	5%	5.5%	11.2%	1147	▲	00:46	00:48	01:57	▲	
Emergency Home Care	82%	82%	82%	↔	5.9%	7.3%	7.5%	726	▲	00:40	00:43	00:32	▼	
Emergency Home Care	81%	78%	75%	▼	7.8%	7.2%	7.3%	4889	▲	00:47	00:55	00:58	▲	
Emergency Social Work	86%	81%	88%	▲	7.7%	6.8%	11.8%	172	▲	00:35	00:44	00:24	▼	
1 Edinburgh	67%	65%	65%	↔	5.5%	6.5%	6.5%	4990	↔	01:08	01:20	01:20	↔	
Repairs Direct	80%	46%	23%	▼	3.9%	17.3%	29.8%	18501	▲	00:57	03:37	11:06	▲	
Repairs Planners	92%	87%	85%	▼	3.8%	6%	6.1%	3707	▲	00:18	00:24	00:30	▲	
SCD Professional Adult	70%	67%	64%	▼	4.6%	7.9%	7.7%	575	▼	00:59	00:57	01:07	▲	
SCD Public Adult	62%	61%	57%	▼	10.4%	10.6%	10.2%	11280	▼	01:47	01:48	01:53	▲	
Scottish Welfare Fund	74%	73%	65%	▼	5.3%	4.8%	5.5%	3512	▲	02:13	02:06	02:31	▲	
Repairs - Tradesman	87%	68%	53%	▼	3.7%	6%	7.8%	6914	▲	00:26	00:56	01:32	▲	
Waste Special Uplifts	66%	58%	59%	▲	2.2%	2.5%	3%	1007	▲	01:16	01:43	01:47	▲	
Waste	76%	75%	66%	▼	1.4%	1.5%	1.7%	1555	▲	00:42	00:48	01:11	▲	
Environment	76%	68%	58%	▼	0.7%	3.3%	3.9%	1174	▲	00:51	01:16	01:42	▲	
FM Helpdesk	89%	86%	81%	▼	4%	7%	10.2%	1857	▲	00:23	00:26	00:39	▲	
Building Standards	75%	71%	76%	▲	2.2%	3.1%	3%	869	▼	00:53	01:07	00:57	▼	
Planning	77%	70%	74%	▲	2.8%	4.5%	3.1%	410	▼	00:50	01:06	01:01	▼	
PBS Building Payments	87%	75%	73%	▼	2.8%	5.4%	4.8%	217	▼	00:29	00:48	01:05	▲	
Supply Hub	77%	82%	73%	▼	17.6%	18.8%	22.4%	316	▲	00:15	00:18	00:35	▲	
Debt Services	66%	38%	52%	▲	7.4%	18.9%	10.7%	1543	▼	00:52	02:41	01:35	▼	
Garden Waste	74%	73%	37%	▼	3.8%	2.2%	21.7%	6708	▲	01:04	01:01	04:38	▲	
General Enquiries	85%	78%	77%	▼	3.3%	4.8%	5%	15094	▲	00:26	00:39	00:44	▲	
Customer Care		78%	58%	▼		4.5%	6.5%	2127	▲		01:00	01:47	▲	
Shielding	72%	75%			6.3%	8.1%				00:57	00:41			
Vulnerable	78%	76%	73%	▼	4%	8.1%	5.3%	1723	▼	00:47	00:42	00:56	▲	
Annual Gas Servicing	92%	71%	54%	▼	2.5%	7.8%	14.6%	1426	▲	00:29	01:40	02:45	▲	
Self-Isolation Payments	70%	73%	61%	▼	7.9%	8.4%	12.9%	3363	▲	01:40	01:40	02:17	▲	
Locality Lines	82%	81%	78%	▼	4%	3.6%	5.1%	8232	▲	00:31	00:34	00:42	▲	
Homelessness	85%	83%	85%	▲	4.9%	4.9%	4.7%	1550	▼	00:34	00:38	00:35	▼	
Licensing Payments	67%	84%	83%	▼	11.5%	4.8%	4.6%	2778	▼	01:55	00:51	00:56	▲	

Contact Centre Performance Overview

Performance Measures



Commentary

- 38 lines reported during the reporting period April – June 2021 reducing to 37 in July – September 2021 following the closure of the Shielding line.
 - 148,010 calls were handled during July to September 2021.
 - 26 out of 37 lines met or exceeded service in the period July – September 2021 (this is consistent with resourcing ongoing pressures directly linked to Covid e.g. welfare and financial support)
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- The Contact Centre is answering 87.5% of all calls received. This is based on 37 lines open
 - 24 out of 37 lines achieved the 8% stretch target for the period July – September 2021.
 - Recruitment, cross skilling and utilisation of wider Customer Teams to support ongoing pressures
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- Average wait times increased during the current reporting period. This is a result of supporting additional workstreams, reallocating resource to support critical service and dealing with more complex queries.
 - Recruitment, cross skilling and utilisation of wider Customer Teams to support ongoing pressures