

Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 26 February 2019

Contact Centre Performance: October - December 2018

Item number	8.1
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	All
Council Commitments	

Executive Summary

The report details Contact Centre performance for the period October to December 2018 and outlines associated service improvement activities.

Contact Centre Performance: October to December 2018

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee notes the:
 - 1.1.1 current performance trends within the Contact Centre; and
 - 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.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee receives regular updates on Contact Centre performance, trends, and ongoing service improvement activities. This report covers a 3-month period from October 2018 to December 2018 and the data is based on call performance target of 60% of calls answered within 60 seconds, as agreed by Committee in August 2018. This change means a comparison with previous results (55% target) is not directly applicable, however, the previous data is included for completeness.

3. Main report

Overview

- 3.1 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 and web chat.

Current Trends and Service Performance

- 3.2 Regular management information is produced to monitor performance and inform future improvement activities. The current reporting period saw various Council projects that impacted on Contact Centre activities, including further recovery action to support Council Tax collection rates, the second registration of Garden Waste and operational changes within the waste operation (4-day week). This resulted in increased Waste service calls which materially impacted the waste and environmental contact services, customer care and local office support. The Council Tax and Scottish Welfare Fund services also experienced increased contact levels, with a resulting impact on service lines and wait times generally.

Where possible Contact Centre resource was reallocated to meet service demands and support key services.

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 October to December 2018 was 172,473, a reduction of 36 calls on the same period in 2017. Whilst volumes remained generally consistent across the 3-month period there were significant variables, with October 2018 calls 14% higher than October 2017, resulting in the Contact Centre's busiest month of 2018. December 2018 was a quieter month, with a 10.5% reduction in calls when compared with December 2017.
- Increased contact levels impacted on teams disproportionately: Council Tax experienced a 27% increase in calls, Waste had a 39% increase in calls and Scottish Welfare saw a 43.9% increase in call volumes and 10.5% increase in applications. Demand for other channels e.g. emails has increased year on year, with an average 10% increase in this channel.
- Service Lines - 23 of our 36 (64%) lines achieved the 60% of calls answered within 60 seconds service level target in the current reporting period. A further 5 lines achieved a 50% or higher service level.
- 27 of our 36 lines were within the 10% call abandonment tolerance target with 21 lines achieving the 8% stretch tolerance target.
- 21 of our 36 lines reported an increase in average handling time (AHT). Despite this increase, the AHT for all lines reduced to 334 seconds from the previous reported figure of 346 seconds. 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 activity helps reduce the number of required outbound and follow up calls.
- 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 3 months the Contact Centre has scored 92%, against a target of 80%, demonstrating a consistency of performance and positive quality of service outcomes.
- Social Media - twitter contact, has seen a 67% percent increase with 26,165 tweets being received Oct – Dec 20018 compared with 15,693 for the same period in 2017. This demonstrates Citizens appetite to use other contact channels for servicing enquiries and builds on the need for our digital transformation.

3.4 The Mitel telephony system 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 is being further developed to ensure robust and accurate management information and the target will be to consistently achieve the public-sector industry customer satisfaction standard of 75%. We are currently achieving 79.2% performance, an increase from 70% in the last reporting period. All feedback is

reviewed, particularly where there has been dissatisfaction, and action is taken to close service gaps and improve the overall experience.

- 3.5 Formal complaints relating to contact activities are tracked, with 80 complaints received over the 3-month period (84 in the corresponding 2017 period). Complaint levels remain comparatively low, equating 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 and expectations are given to citizens.

Ongoing Projects & Improvement Activities

- 3.6 The latest data highlights that contact performance fluctuates when there is increased demand, often because of external factors. This is effectively demonstrated by the Garden Waste project and the introduction of the 4-day waste collection service. This resulted in significant contact volumes, with the waste line receiving 9641 calls for October - December 2018, compared to 2384 calls for the same period in 2017, a 404% increase. The Missed Collections line received 4752 calls between October – December 2018, compared to 932 calls in the same reporting period in 2017, a 509% increase. Social media contact also increased significantly and this sustained volume spike across all channels impacted performance in the Contact Centre, with resource reallocated to best meet demand and support performance levels.
- 3.7 The Contact Centre's scheduling team is now using historic and real-time data to forecast service demand and model resource requirements e.g. as part of the garden waste registration lessons learned activity contact levels were reassessed and additional resource was secured to support the latest registration period more effectively.
- 3.8 The Scottish Welfare fund, Council Tax and Benefits team also experienced service pressures during the final 3 months of 2018. The Council Tax team experienced a 27% increase in calls linked to ongoing activities to maximise Council Tax collection rates. Welfare reform changes have also had an impact with a 43.9% increase in Scottish Welfare calls and a further 10.5% increase in applications during 2018. Despite the increase in contact levels the Welfare line delivered improved performance in the last quarter of 2018 and work is ongoing to address these pressures. A recruitment exercise has been completed and advisors continue to be multi skilled to ensure that the team can flexibly tackle emerging issues. An online form has also been launched and this can be accessed on the Council's website and on self-help kiosks in the Council's local offices, where further support is also available. Foodbank referrals continue to grow and the Welfare Team are actively engaging with the foodbanks to ensure all requests are appropriately referred. Every effort is being made to work more efficiently, however, if demand levels continue to spike across all welfare services then approximately 3 additional FTE will be required to meet service levels. This will be kept under review and proposals brought forward in the normal way.

- 3.9 Support for the Social Care professional and public adult lines remains a key focus with 83% and 71% service levels achieved during this quarter. This represents a significant improvement when compared with the last two updates to Committee. The service is also receiving increased electronic communication, with a 25% increase reported during 2018. All channels will be monitored via the new telephony/communications systems to ensure the correct balance between call handling and email performance.
- 3.10 Performance in the Repairs Direct team has been a key focus area for the Customer Contact team with a joint improvement action plan in place. Management changes were made in November 2018 and an additional Team Leader post will be appointed in 2019 to help drive performance. The performance trends showed a decrease in calls answered within 60 seconds in Quarter 4 at 16%, however this is against a context of generally rising contact (October 2018 v October 2017 - 31% increase, November 2018 v November 2017 - 8% increase, whilst December 2018 saw a 11% contact reduction compared with December 2017).
- 3.11 There has also been a corresponding increase in Repairs Direct job requests, with a 13% increase compared with the last reporting period and a 20.1% increase in follow up outbound calls. Email volumes are up year on year with 1984 emails in 2018 (highest volume in 2018), and 1700 emails in November 2018 (3rd highest month of 2018). To support this type of electronic contact the Contact Team is introducing structured forms such as the non-emergency repairs online form. This initiative will ensure that all required information is captured and requests can be processed more efficiently.
- 3.12 The effectiveness of the Repairs Direct team has also been impacted by the turnover of experienced staff, many of whom left having secured higher graded roles within the Council and other external organisations. To create greater stability within the team a permanent recruitment exercise was completed in January 2019 and this has created essential resource capacity.
- 3.13 Demand levels in the Repairs team remain weather dependent and any sustained winter weather will result in further service challenges. This is being assessed as part of our evolving resource forecasting techniques and the Contact Team is engaging with service colleagues to ensure priority activities are targeted and processes are as efficient as possible. Recently new ways of working have been introduced and this has seen positive trends in 2019 with service levels exceeding 50%. This work is ongoing and colleagues from the locality teams have spent time with Repairs Direct to improve their service knowledge and better assist citizens that visit the Council's local offices. Colleagues are also actively promoting appropriate online forms that can be accessed on the Council's self-service terminals and website.
- 3.14 The Contact team continues to implement changes to improve the citizen experience. In addition to cross skilling, targeted coaching has been undertaken to increase agents call capacity, with 5-10% improvement being achieved in some teams. In-call coaching and call intervention is also being introduced to ensure best

practice is adopted across all services. The use of technology also plays an important role in Contact Centre activities and following the recent introduction of web chat and an internal knowledge base, a new automated email system has gone live that supports and prioritises the allocation of transactions. The planned changes to the Council website in 2019 will continue to create opportunities to improve the customer experience and simplify how citizens engage with the Council. Future developments will ensure that Citizens can use the website for a wide variety of online service transactions and importantly the Council will also be able to proactively communicate appropriate messages and alerts to citizens

- 3.15 The automated call routing functionality is regularly updated to ensure that it is working effectively and callers receive simple service choices. This is an ongoing task and currently up to 60% of callers can self-serve using the available options. Call management technology will also be launched in the first half of 2019 that will allow citizens to request call-backs and improve the overall contact experience.
- 3.16 A new comprehensive customer relationship management (CRM) system will be delivered in 2019. This will be a vital component in the Contact Centre delivering its targeted efficiencies of 15% in 2019/20. The project is being jointly progressed by Customer and Digital Services and the Council's ICT Partner, CGI.
- 3.17 Social media contact continues to grow and the Contact Centre Team is committed to adopting a more citizen focused "one and done" approach. This 24/7 service is dependent on real time service updates and protocols are being introduced that will ensure responses and updates accurately reflect current service delivery standards. The Contact Centre is also continuing to add online forms and appropriate self-serve functionality. This includes a refresh of the self-service machines that are situated in the Council's local offices, to enhance the digital journey and improve the overall experience. These initiatives will ensure that Contact resource is allocated to those services and customers that require agent or face to face interaction and more direct support.
- 3.18 The Contact teams in the local offices are also using technology and data analysis to review resourcing levels and support changes to traditional ways of working. As part of this work we have been engaging with relevant agencies such as the Tenants Federation on office layouts and customer experience. During 2019 we will also be progressing changes around cash handling, service advice and opening times, to ensure that customer resource is aligned with existing demand levels.

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 2019/20 and this will be achieved through several 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 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 because 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 – September 2018 - Report to Corporate, Policy and Strategy, December 2018

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

Stephen S. Moir

Executive Director of Resources

Contact: Nicola Harvey, Head of Customer and Digital Services

E-mail: nicola.harvey2@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 469 5006

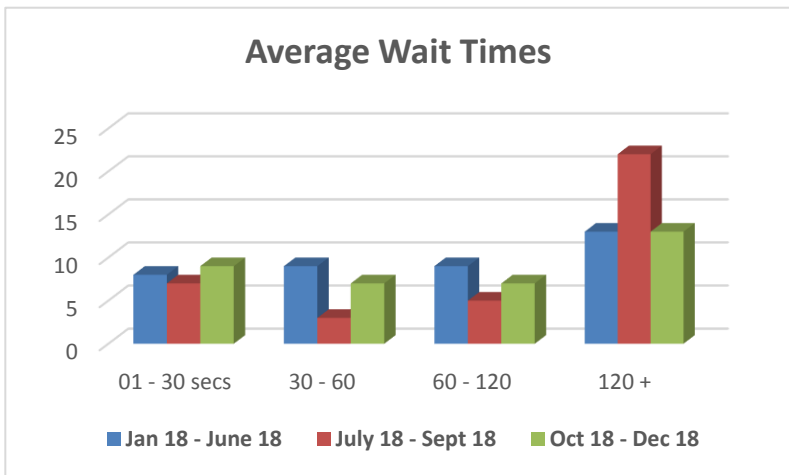
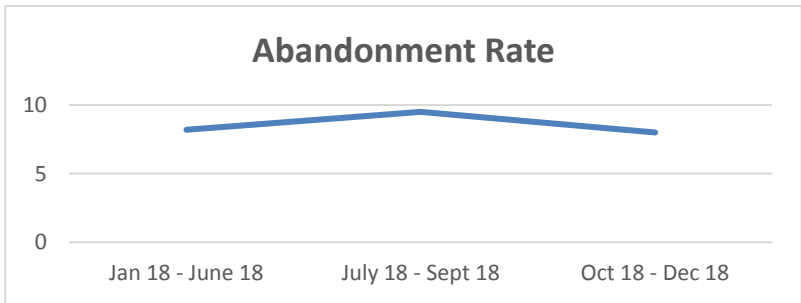
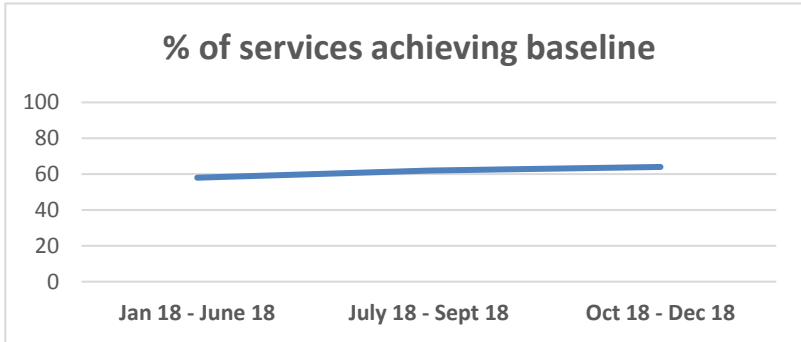
11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Customer Centre Performance Data

Contact Centre Performance Overview

Performance Measure

Commentary



- 23 lines achieved 60% service level (a further 5 lines achieved 50% or above service level).
- 16 lines showed an improved trend and plans in place to further improve
- Total calls answered for Oct/Dec 2018 was 172,473 (consistent with 2017)
- Some services experienced significant contact increases: Council Tax 27% increase, Waste 39% increase, Scottish Welfare 43.9%
- Overall Call abandonment rate dropped to 8% over the 3-month period achieving our stretched target. The Contact Centre is answering 92% of all calls received.
- 27 lines are achieving the 10% or below calls abandonment threshold target with 21 lines achieving the 8% stretch target. 23 lines show an improved trend.
- 20 lines show an improving trend seeing a reduction in their average wait times.
- First touch resolution continues to be a focus to avoid repeat contact from customers (average call handling has reduced by 12 seconds compared with previous period)
- Online/self-service continues to be promoted to allow customers to self-serve where they can without the need to call.
- Continued focus on code handling to ensure we have maximum staff capacity available to take calls and new shift patterns being introduced to cover periods of higher demand e.g. 10-2 shift.

Contact Centre - Performance Data

Contact Activity & Timescale	% Calls answered within 30 seconds SLA target of 55% (Jan – June 18 only) Jul onwards 60%				Abandonment target – not exceed 10%, with a stretch target of 8%					Average Wait Times			
	Jan – June 18	Jul - Sept 18	Oct – Dec 18	Trend Jul–Sept / Oct–Dec 18	Jan – June 18	Jul – Sept 18	Oct – Dec 18	Total Calls Handled	Trend Jul–Sept / Oct–Dec 18	Jan – June 18	Jul – Sept 18	Oct – Dec 18	Trend Jul–Sept / Oct–Dec 18
Anti-Social Behaviour	83%	94%	85%	▼	2.8%	2.1%	5.5%	86	▲	00:23	00:15	00:36	▲
Central Emergency Serv	70%	76%	73%	▼	7.3%	10.6%	7.4%	6707	▼	00:52	01:16	01:04	▼
C & F Professional Child	69%	87%	79%	▼	7.8%	3%	4.7%	1773	▲	01:11	00:35	00:43	▲
C & F Public Child	67%	88%	74%	▼	9.2%	4.8%	6.6%	1950	▲	01:31	00:42	01:02	▲
Emergency Child	77%	70%	88%	▲	3.5%	3.4%	3.1%	189	▼	00:43	01:05	00:27	▼
Clarence	49%	57%	57%	↔	9.4%	12.9%	12.4%	2621	▼	01:53	02:03	01:43	▼
Council Tax	39%	42%	48%	▲	11.8%	14.1%	9.8%	23770	▼	03:30	04:49	03:58	▼
Benefits	51%	63%	65%	▲	6.3%	4.8%	3.4%	8710	▼	02:27	02:12	02:06	▼
NDR	47%	52%	50%	▼	9.3%	10.9%	9.4%	1352	▼	02:36	02:54	03:09	▲
Customer Care	86%	93%	87%	▼	2.4%	1.5%	1.6%	4875	▲	00:26	00:20	00:32	▲
Food Bank	42%	66%	62%	▼	27.6%	14.1%	11.2%	1338	▼	05:45	02:39	01:48	▼
Emergency Home Care	88%	94%	91%	▼	4.2%	3.4%	3.7%	7345	▲	00:14	00:13	00:17	▲
Emergency Home Care	87%	95%	89%	▼	4.1%	2.1%	4.1%	992	▲	00:17	00:14	00:19	▲
Emergency Social Work	88%	93%	90%	▼	3.5%	2.9%	4.1%	4539	▲	00:19	00:22	00:22	↔
Interpretation	96%	78%	100%	▲	5%	0%	0%	7	↔	00:02	03:17	00:07	▼
ITS Daytime	82%	93%	91%	▼	11%	4.1%	2.9%	1020	▼	00:39	00:35	00:22	▼
1 Edinburgh	43%	53%	56%	▲	11.8%	12.2%	11.3%	4520	▼	02:10	02:21	01:55	▼
Repairs Direct	39%	38%	16%	▼	18.6%	26.4%	43.8%	16611	▲	03:24	05:15	11:39	▲
Repairs Planners	72%	92%	87%	▼	5.3%	2.3%	3%	11121	▲	00:39	00:18	00:24	▲
SCD Professional Adult	59%	60%	83%	▲	8.2%	11%	7.3%	698	▼	01:09	01:24	00:30	▼
SCD Public Adult	54%	53%	71%	▲	14.6%	18.7%	8.2%	9130	▼	02:25	03:07	01:17	▼
Welfare Fund Comm.	45%	39%		▲	11.7%	31%		9412	▼	03:13	07:06		▼
Welfare Fund Crisis	42%	30%	48%		7.1%	4.1%	11.3%			06:21	09:24	04:35	
Repairs - Tradesman	54%	51%	52%	▲	8.9%	14.7%	12.1%	8637	▼	01:16	02:08	02:14	▲
Repairs - Quality Care	47%	43%	38%	▼	5.4%	13.8%	8.9%	1046	▼	01:26	02:20	03:18	▲
Special Waste Uplifts	38%	43%	42%	▼	13.4%	12.2%	8.9%	3378	▼	02:55	03:57	04:00	▲
Waste	40%	55%	67%	▲	8.7%	13.7%	5.5%	9114	▼	02:18	03:42	01:53	▼
Environment	38%	42%	45%	▲	10.9%	16.9%	9.9%	1768	▼	02:36	03:58	03:23	▼
Missed Collections	46%	57%	63%	▲	9.3%	10.2%	6.5%	4441	▼	02:00	02:42	02:29	▼
FM Helpdesk	89%	93%	93%	↔	3.2%	3.3%	2.6%	4449	▼	00:12	00:14	00:12	▼
Building Standards	60%	69%	47%	▼	5.6%	7.4%	14.2%	1782	▲	01:03	01:21	02:35	▲
Planning	61%	70%	49%	▼	5.7%	7.4%	15.1%	1313	▲	01:02	01:21	02:22	▲
PBS Building Payments	57%	75%	56%	▼	9.7%	7.7%	13.7%	1187	▲	01:16	01:10	02:11	▲
CE Local Office	71%				8%					00:29			
EE Local Office	70%				6.8%					00:32			
NE Local Office	74%				3.5%					00:30			
SE Local Office	73%				4.6%					00:30			
SWE Local Office	72%				6.3%					00:33			
WE Local Office	70%				7.8%					00:30			
North East Locality		62%	78%	▲		9.1%	4.1%	3675	▼		01:20	00:39	▼
North West Locality		61%	79%	▲		9.2%	4.4%	4817	▼		01:23	00:37	▼
South East Locality		62%	78%	▲		10.4%	4.6%	4113	▼		01:19	00:39	▼
South West Locality		61%	78%	▲		8.6%	4.2%	3987	▼		01:22	00:38	▼

Commentary

- Calls handled over the reporting period reporting Oct to Dec 18 is 172,473.
- Scottish Welfare lines merged from reporting period Oct – Dec 18 this is due to changes to call routing and multi-skilling of agents