

Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement

Meeting to be held on 10 March 2015

Electoral Division affected: All

Customer Access Performance Report

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Executive Summary

This report provides an update for Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement on the operation of the Customer Access Service.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement is asked to note and comment on the contents of this report.

Background and Advice

Customer Access Service (CAS) is the first point of contact for 60% of all incoming telephony and e-mail enquiries to the County Council. CAS was established in 2005 with 16 full time equivalent (FTE) employees and by 2015 this has risen to 200+ FTE employees. Social Care telephony services were introduced into CAS in 2007 and since then the service has grown considerably, currently delivering twenty four County Council services and two West Lancashire Borough Council services.

Within the dedicated Social Care Centre a highly specialised and sensitive service is delivered offering information, advice and assistance on all matters relating to Adult and Children's social care, including Help Direct calls. CAS covers issues as simple as meals on wheels applications all the way through to complex child protection and safeguarding adult issues.

CAS advisors process all Social Care contacts and referrals using processes and procedures agreed with the Directorate for Children and Young People (CYP) and the Adult Services, Health and Wellbeing Directorate (ASHW) checking systems and updating chronologies which enable social care professionals to focus on thresholds and decision making.

The Customer Contact Centre delivers twenty three services including; Highways, Libraries, NowCard, Registrars, Certificates, Waste, and Welfare Rights. Staff are required to deliver both detailed transactional services and validated signposting to agencies across the public sector. This requires detailed training and ongoing professional development to ensure all manner of requests, from referral and signposting, to end to end resolution exceed customer expectations.

CAS advisors are the first line advice and support channel for County Council customers, and contacts are often of a sensitive nature, requiring delicate handling. Each service delivery is governed by its own specific legislation, therefore, the CAS has to ensure that staff are fully trained and deliver accordingly.

CAS advisors are supported by a dedicated training team which provides bespoke training packages in line with the range of services provided. CAS delivers services with a focus on understanding the customer perspective.

CAS encourages behaviours so that:

- The customer experiences a natural conversation with CAS staff;
- Every customer is treated with respect, dignity and understanding;
- Customer need is the cornerstone of service delivery;
- Quality and timeliness is emphasised;
- Customers are not passed around before their enquiry is answered;
- New technology ensuring access to services is easier for the public;
- Knowledge of all local government services is readily available to all staff as their primary reference;
- A single customer record is used so that customers do not have to repeat what they have already told us and this is used to support case and service level decision making;
- We get it right first time

We measure performance so that:

- We can tell that enquiries are handled without undue delay;
- Set targets and objectives are consistently exceeded by making good use of workforce planning tools and management information;
- The customer experience is measured, assessed and services re-engineered to deliver the optimum experience

The CAS dedicated training team provide a rigorous induction programme for all staff. This covers:

- Customer Care and soft skills
- Technical service and systems knowledge
- Health and safety
- How the organisation is run
- Data protection legislation
- Best practice for telephony, e-mail and web access channels

This is structured so that staff receive:

- A 5 week training induction
- e-Learning modular programme
- Several weeks spent on our nursery bank for peer to peer coaching
- Intensive monitoring and coaching by team leaders
- Interim and probationary reviews

Longer term an ongoing timetable of development and refresher training is provided, utilising a mix of workshops, coaching, and job shadowing of delegates from all client services which has proved crucial to effective service delivery.

Staff have generic contracts and are offered a matrix framework of grades and accelerated progression to encourage development. This is driven from their Personal Development Plan which may include:

- Fast tracking based on relevant skill sets being achieved
- Customer Services qualification courses
- Aspiring team leader courses
- Aspiring management courses
- One to one feedback sessions
- Team building days/events
- Regular communication and feedback from senior managers

Before introducing any new service, CAS Business Performance Transformation Team (BTPP) scopes and evaluates how the service is currently designed and delivered. This includes measuring call volumes, average handling times, processes, systems used and number of FTE required. CAS BTPP works closely with the new service to re-engineer processes from end to end, design and deliver suitable training packages and identify improvements, savings and consistent service delivery before the service is fully integrated within CAS.

The most recently integrated services within CAS are;

- Help Direct
- Care and Urgent Needs Support Scheme
- Libraries
- Procure 2 Pay
- West Lancashire Borough Council Revenues
- West Lancashire Borough Council Benefits

Our main stakeholders are members of the public and we undertake daily surveys to ensure customers are effectively represented and championed within the authority and with our partners. This data helps to improve the level of evidence based customer insight to better respond to the changing needs of our customers

We have agreed service level agreements for services located within the Customer Service Centre and we meet at regular intervals to review, amend, discuss and update as necessary.

Management and teams have taken collective responsibility to enhance our reputation with a customer focused approach that reflects our customer's diversity and needs.

Staff are empowered to take ownership of every enquiry. CAS has created an environment where staff see the needs of the customer as paramount and have adopted and enjoy exploring new ways of working.

We believe that listening to our staff is just as important as listening to our customers in order to develop leadership skills as a division and move the service forward. This has helped to create an innovative customer focussed team.

Consultations

Internal/external customers and service areas, including IT, HR and CAS staff.

Performance and Transformation

Customer Access is actively involved with delivering requirements to support the following work areas within the programme:

- **Blue Badge Service:** In October CAS carried out detailed analysis to identify why call volumes to the Blue Badge line had increased. We established over **40%** of calls monitored were received from customers who were chasing up Blue Badge applications. It was evident customers were frustrated and unhappy regarding delays in time taken to process their applications. This resulted in a marked increase in the number of complaints.

To provide some immediate support for the Blue Badge team, CAS agreed to release two members of the customer service team on a full time basis to assist with the processing element of the badges in order to reduce backlog. In addition a member of the Business Transformation team was assigned to look at scoping a service improvement plan.

In October 2014 the Blue Badge team had **2,500** pieces of work and a processing time of five weeks. By February, CAS had six advisors trained and assisting with processing Blue Badges and great progress has been achieved, driving processing times down to **five working days**. Complaints and repeat calls have also significantly reduced. CAS will continue to support the Blue Badge team in processing badges whilst our business transformation team has assigned a Change Manager to work closely with the Blue Badge service in order to carry out an end to end review of service delivery, look at the Occupational Therapy project and also manage the relocation of the team to Lancashire House.

- **Telly Talk:** Following refurbishment of the accommodation in the Minerva Centre, Preston, the centre requested an alternative location to house the Telly Talk unit be sourced as they no longer had a suitable area for it to be accommodated. Following discussions with the Libraries service and BT Lancashire Services (BTLs), Ingol Library was identified as the most suitable alternative venue to the Minerva Centre. The relocation has taken longer than first anticipated due to technical issues within Ingol Library. These have now been overcome and the Telly Talk equipment has been fully tested in its new environment. The service has been up and running since 11 February. All twelve units are currently operational.
- **0300 Telephony Project** - Take up of the new 0300 numbers has exceeded all expectations and uptake has reached **78%**. The target for take up in the first year was **30%** which was exceeded in month one.

- **Care Act 2015** - CAS is included in the working group which has been established to scope and manage the response to the media campaign and the wider implementation process between now and April 2016.
In preparation for the Care Act media campaign starting on 2 February 2015, CAS has set up a dedicated Care Act phone line in order to deal with specific Care Act related questions. All Social Care advisors have attended briefing sessions giving a further insight into the changes due to take place. Worktrays have been established with the Carers Service to allow some early enquiries from carers to be captured. The next steps involve preparing CAS and the social care advisers for the implementation of the Act, which will be phased across April 2015, October 2015 and April 2016. Key areas of work will focus on: the way that we offer information and advice (Autonomy project); the processes in place to assess needs and eligibility for both carers and those with care and support needs; updates to the Liquidlogic Adults Social Care (LAS) and Liquidlogic Childrens Social Care (LCS) Systems (LiquidLogic v6 and v7) and training for advisers.

- **Integrated Wellbeing Service** - A Service briefing was attended which outlined proposals for the new Integrated Wellbeing Service which will replace the current Help Direct service. As requested by the service, contributions to the proposal document have been submitted back to the group.

- **Sensory Impairment** - Attendance at the Corporate Working Group is ongoing with representatives attending a session arranged with a supplier to demonstrate their Sign Vision system which is being considered by the service.
. A new policy to hold and manage a sight register for visually impaired adults in Lancashire was approved by the Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services on 15 January. As a result the Acorn entry has been drafted and is currently being re-worked following review with Change Management and Social Care Operations.

- **Social Care ACORN Review** - Work is currently underway to review Social Care Acorn entries. Information will be updated and where possible entries will be revamped using the new re-write format. We anticipate this project will span over a six month period due to the volumes of information required to be reviewed.

- **Waste Helpline** - Impact, resource and work requirements have been scoped with the Waste Management Service in readiness for potential changes required to both systems and business processes should approval be given to the proposal for the introduction of a new chargeable permit scheme for the disposal of non-household waste at recycling centres.

- **Web and Digital Services Board** - Customer Access attended the first Steering Group meeting for Web and Digital services on 9 December. The group will meet regularly to ensure the council's resources for web and other digital services are focused on supporting the council's main priorities,

ensuring a more joined up approach to provide consistent and meaningful advice across all channels. Customer Access will contribute to proposals by identifying corporate web development projects and aligning these to the Customer Access Road Map and Service Improvement Programme.

- **Quarter Three 2014/2015 Performance** - In Quarter Three, the Customer Access Service received **207,550 calls**, and answered **191,626**, achieving a service level of **92.3%**.
- CAS Social Care **exceeded** contractual targets during Quarter Three, with **80,969** calls answered, achieving a service level of **90.3%**. In the corresponding period last year, **78,103** calls were answered. This represents an increase of **2,866 calls (3.7%)**.
- In part this increase is attributed to the extended Core hours for Social Care, which commenced on 17 November. CAS Social Care lines are now open for an additional four hours daily (8am - 9am & 5pm - 8pm) Monday - Friday and 8am - 7pm on weekends (an additional **42** hours per week is now captured on the 8am - 8pm Dashboard). **96%** of all CAS calls are offered and handled between 8am - 8pm.
- The introduction of Liquid Logic, which replaced the previous social care information system known as the Integrated Social Services Information System (ISSIS), is expected to contribute to improvements in the call waiting time for social care queries. However, the adult module within Liquid Logic has experienced various technical issues which have impacted on call handling and wait times. These issues have been escalated to BTLS/ICT who are working to identify and resolve the issues. CAS is working to reduce call wait times and despite the system issues the call wait times have been reduced significantly, with over **60% of calls answered within twenty seconds over the last quarter**. Earlier vacancies have now been filled and full training will be completed by end of March, following which we should see a marked improvement in call wait times.
- **Non Telephony Contacts**
In Quarter Three, CAS handled **30,974** emails (**11,422** Contact Centre and **19,552** Social Care).

ICT System Issues affecting performance

Outages of the CA telephony platform (Avaya) has resulted in some disruption to the telephone lines, email technology, call recording, quality monitoring and customer survey lines. This has had an additional impact on service delivery as the Resource Planning team has been unable to access the scripting element of the telephony platform at certain times to work on essential changes/updates to the telephone lines. The severity of the issue resulted in work involving BTLS, BT and members of the Resource Planning Team taking place out of hours. Proposals are being accelerated to scope a suitable replacement telephony platform. CAS has produced a statement of requirements in preparation.

Improvements and self service

- Extended hours of operation within Social Care and Libraries Service
- Engagement with service areas to re-engineer existing process
- New self-service functionality within the Registrar Service
- Transfer from ISSIS to Liquid Logic platform within Social Care
- Transfer to 0300 contact numbers
- Highways self-service fault finding

Future Improvements

AskHR and Pensions Helpdesks are in the process of being integrated into CAS, which was effective from 16 February 2015. This will increase the CAS headcount by **39FTE**. Over the next few months CAS will review and re-engineer processes within these services to maximise productivity and optimise the customer experience.

Blue Badge Service administration team is being reviewed and a joint working exercise commenced in November 2014 to review their current end to end processes and turnaround times. A significant back-log was identified and a joint working exercise introduced which has now reduced the back-log from five weeks to five days. CAS has appointed a change manager to review Blue Badge processes from end to end, including the Occupational Therapy project. It is proposed the full service will transfer within CAS, shortly, therefore, we intend to absorb the team seamlessly with an improved customer journey.

Telly Talk: The Telly Talk service will be upgraded in April. This will enable equipment and software compatibility with 'Windows 7'. Whilst this upgrade will not impact on the current delivery model it is expected that the new PCs will improve the stability of the equipment. In addition to this the Customer Access Service is working closely with BTLs/IT to explore and identify further improvements or alternative solutions to replace and/or enhance this service. The remit includes in depth analysis of customer expectations balanced with a realistic service model.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

This report is for noting and therefore a risk analysis in relation to the content on this report has not been required.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
Nil		

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A.