

Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement

Meeting to be held on 10 December 2015

Electoral Division affected: All

Customer Access Performance Report

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Executive Summary

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

Recommendation

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

Background and Advice

The 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, initially delivering only 4 services. Our strategic plan has been to migrate additional services into CAS to better serve the citizens of Lancashire, whilst improving costs and efficiency. CAS 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. CAS cover 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 Children and Adult services, checking systems and updating chronologies which enable social care professionals to focus on thresholds and decision making. Advisors are fully supported by on site qualified social care professionals to ensure safe practice and promote more integrated ways of working across adult and children's services.

CAS delivers twenty six services including; Highways, Libraries, NowCard, Registrars, Certificates, Waste, 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 provided is governed by its own specific legislation, therefore, the CAS has to ensure that staff are fully trained and able to deliver accordingly.

CAS advisors are supported by a dedicated training team, who provide bespoke training packages in line with the range of services provided. CAS deliver services with a focus on understanding the customer perspective.

CAS encourage 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 provides 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:

- Classroom based training (training period varies dependent on service);
- 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) scope and evaluate 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 BPTT work 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:

- Ask HR helpdesk;
- Ask Pensions helpdesk;
- Blue Badge Service.

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 customers' 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 Transformation and Improvement

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

Blue Badge Service: The Blue Badge administration team was fully integrated within CAS in June 2015. This has resulted in a dramatic increase in the use of the online service from approximately **15%** to **87%**. CAS has also jointly worked with the Library Service to promote the use of computers with free internet access for Blue Badge application across the county. Members of Library staff are able to provide assistance to customers applying for a Blue Badge who may not otherwise have access to the internet.

New technology used to administer Blue Badge applications (the Blue Badge Improvement Service (BBIS)) has resulted in the ability for applicants to attach documentation to online applications. Previously, online and telephone applicants were required to submit supporting documentation via email or post in a separate transaction. As a result, around **25%** of online applicants are now utilising the option to attach supporting documentation to their application and it is anticipated this will steadily increase.

A formalised procedure for dealing with appeals and complaints has been developed since the Blue Badge Service transferred into CAS. This means that appeals and complaints are now dealt with within specific timescales and follow a standard escalation route.

There has been a **71% reduction in official complaints** received by the Blue Badge Service in the five months since they joined CAS, June to October 2015, compared to the preceding five month period, January to May 2015.

	January 2015 – May 2015	June 2015 – October 2015
No. of Complaints	28	8

Table 1: Official Complaints Received by the Blue Badge Service.

Automated Surveys

Our customers are offered the opportunity to complete a survey based upon their perception and opinion of the service they experienced during contact with the County Council. This provides an unbiased gauge/view of our service delivery, however, it does not cover every single caller, only those who opt to complete our automated survey. **37,000** plus surveys have been completed year to date in respect of our Contact Centre, HR & Pensions and Social Care services, and it does appear

reasonably consistent and representative. We hope to improve on our first point contact resolution through the deployment of new technology within the replacement telephony platform which is currently coming to the end of the tender process. The tables below detail how many surveys have been completed year to date along with the percentage of contacts, which were resolved at first point of contact from a customer perspective.

	Customer Contact Centre	
	Resolution of Customers specific Enquiry	Surveys Completed per month
Apr-15	90.04	4279
May-15	91.27	2738
Jun-15	91.02	3303
Jul-15	91.66	3952
Aug-15	91.87	2649
Sep-15	91.54	2830
Oct-15	93.1	1874
YTD	90.6	19751

Table 1 - volume & % of surveys completed ytd within contact centre

	HR & Pension service	
	Resolution of Customers specific Enquiry	Surveys Completed per month
Apr-15	91.6	250
May-15	88.5	147
Jun-15	93.35	210
Jul-15	88.4	183
Aug-15	89.4	201
Sep-15	92.8	251
Oct-15	90.3	259
YTD	90.6	1501

Table 2 - volume & % of surveys completed ytd within HR & Pension services

	Social Care Service	
	Resolution of Customers specific Enquiry	Surveys Completed per month
Apr-15	83.56	2151
May-15	84.75	2036
Jun-15	83.82	2957
Jul-15	83.8	2613
Aug-15	84.58	2794
Sep-15	82.17	2081
Oct-15	86	1286
YTD	84.15	15918

Table 3 - volume & % of surveys completed ytd within Social Care service

HR and Pension Service:

Both services successfully transferred to CAS from April 2015. This has resulted in a significant improvement in call wait times which averaged **31** seconds during Quarter Two, and has further reduced to **21** seconds over the last three months. Year to date, **81%** of these calls were answered in less than 20 seconds with an average wait time of **35** seconds compared to **76.8%** answered in less than 20 seconds during 2014/2015 and an average wait time of **44** seconds.

Adult and Children's Social Care:

CAS and Adult and Children's Social Care are working closely together to more effectively manage, demand and reduce the volume of non-complex work that does not require a full assessment from progressing to the Social Care Service, whilst ensuring the delivery of a safe service remains paramount. Social Care has recently been subject to evaluation by Ofsted and also by the Safeguarding Children's Board, and a further diagnostic is due of the multi-agency safeguarding hub by the Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board. We are striving to work in a more integrated fashion across all roles and functions related to Social Care, including the 'out of hours' service provision.

Information and Advice Service

Following the cessation of the Help Direct service, the Information and Advice service went live within CAS on the 1 September. CAS has retained the Help Direct contact number and is providing the same advisory role previously offered to customers contacting Help Direct. CAS have always resolved the majority of these calls at first point of contact and will continue to do so. Since the introduction of the Information and Advice Service (two months), CAS has handled **1,246** calls and is now providing advice and signposting to approximately **90%** of callers with the remaining **10%** of calls being transferred to the new Wellbeing Service.

The Wellbeing Service can be accessed by referral from a wide range of partners including CAS. The Wellbeing Service comprises 8 teams of Wellbeing Workers covering the whole of Lancashire, and the service will be locally driven responding to needs and working in partnership with key agencies such as primary care teams, statutory partners such as district councils, the VCFS, police early action teams and others.

Quarter Two 2015/2016 Performance

In Quarter Two, the CAS handled **226,626** calls achieving a service level of **94.9%**.

Social Care

CAS Social Care **exceeded** contractual targets during Quarter Two, with **91,956** calls answered, achieving a service level of **94.8%**. In the corresponding period last year, **75,562** calls were answered. This represents an increase of **16,394 calls (21.7%)**.

This trend can be attributed to the Go-Live of the Liquid Logic system from July 2014 which combined with some process re-engineering has resulted in improvements in calls answered and a reduction in wait times. CAS is working to reduce call wait times and despite continuing system issues within the current telephony platform, call wait times have been reduced significantly, with **74% of Social Care calls answered within twenty seconds over the last quarter.**

CAS Contact Centre

All Contact Centre contractual targets were exceeded during Quarter Two. **123,086** calls were answered achieving a service level of **95%**. **76% of Contact Centre calls were answered within 20 seconds.**

HR and Pensions

- AskHR achieved a service level of **94.75%**, with **20,488** calls answered.
- Ask Pensions answered **14,533** calls, achieving a **95.6%** service level. **Both services answered over 80% of calls within twenty seconds.**

Non-Telephony Contacts

- In quarter one the CAS handled **29,844** emails.

Customer Contact Centre

- Received and responded to **11,165** emails.

Social Care

- Received and responded to **18,513** emails.

AskHR and Pensions

- AskHR handled **11,563** emails
- AskPensions handled **8,204** emails.

Future Improvements

Adult Social Care: A team of qualified social workers has recently relocated to Lancashire House, providing greater opportunity for service and workforce development. Dedicated Social Worker and Occupational Therapist resource will develop CAS Team Leaders and advisors to become more confident in decision making and find early resolutions where appropriate.

Up to 40% of equipment referrals will be resolved by CAS advisors at the first point of contact, with the remainder sent directly for allocation, avoiding any re-screening by Social Work teams. Our target is to have all customer advisors trained by end of 2015.

CAS advisors will handle changes in packages of care including reductions, increases (within the remaining budget) and new packages of care for self funders (target end of November).

We are starting to explore plans for CAS to access Care Navigation to support early commissioning of reablement/crisis.

A template for gathering information at CAS is nearing completion, which will reduce the need for additional calls to customers to gather essential information.

Automated Call Distribution (ACD):

The existing platform is nearing its end of life and will be out of support from Dec 2015. Fixes cannot be implemented as it is now approaching five years old. We are currently involved in a procurement exercise to market test alternative technology, and this is being led by BT Lancashire Services Ltd (BTLS). CAS produced a statement of requirements and is actively involved in the evaluation process to realise the following benefits:

- Higher % of calls answered.
- Reduction in call volumes and handling times.
- Higher % of customer self service.
- Reduction in wait times for callers.
- Increased customer satisfaction and experience.
- Integration of additional County Council services at greatly reduced resource costs.
- Decrease in customer/councillor complaints.
- Efficient, motivated staff working in a less pressurised environment.
- Positive impact on the reputation of the County Council

We are working closely with BTLS and have attended site visits and arranged reference site calls to obtain feedback from customers of the vendors participating in the procurement process. A recommendation based on compliancy with the Technical Statement of Requirements will be presented to Management Team during November 2015.

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

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		