

Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Customers & Communities

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr David Fothergill, Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs Division and Local Member(s): All
Lead Officer: Simon Clifford – Director
Author: Jan Stafford – Strategic Manager
Contact Details: (01823) 355010

1. Summary

- 1.1** Customers & Communities are proud of their many achievements and delivery in 18/19 against a backdrop of securing a £1million MTFP saving. Winning South West Contact Centre of the Year in 2018 and recently being shortlisted for the same award in 2019 is something to shout about along with the Operational Lead being nominated for the Contact Centre Manager of the Year.
- 1.2** Other notable successes include Adult Social Care Advisors in the Contact Centre continuing to resolve 60% of all calls at the first point of contact and for some individual advisors' performance has been as high as 80%. In terms of managing the demand going into Adult Social Care this has been a significant achievement and fantastic transformation. In terms of customer satisfaction, the service regularly exceeds levels of 90%+ positive feedback.

2. Key achievements

2.1 Contact Centre

The Customer Contact Centre scooped the South West Medium Sized Contact Centre of the year award in 2018/19, which is quite an achievement as it was up against tough competition including many other Local Authorities, Public Sector and private companies.

The Service has successfully maintained high performance including customer satisfaction with 91% of customers rating the overall service as good or very good which is an increase from 89% in the previous year. We are also very proud that Adults Social Care (ASC) Customer Satisfaction rating has been exceptional at 95%, with 2 months achieving over 97%. This is an impressive percentage when you consider the service receives over 200,000 contacts per year.

Other impressive indicators of success include:

- 62% (target 60%) of calls were successfully signposted to community options (avoiding cost to ASC). Individual days as high

as 75% and individual advisors 80%. The previous year was 53% and the baseline figure was 30% in 2016.

- Average wait times for safeguarding calls (our most vulnerable customers) is 16 seconds.

The service's commitment to driving efficiency, channel shift and demand management work continues with a rise in Blue badge online applications. Prior to April 2018 when the service transferred into the Contact Centre the highest number of monthly online applications received was 36% and since then the highest in February 2019 was 77%, alongside this increase the team also delivered an MTFP efficiency saving of one post.

The Highways Team in the Contact Centre has also seen a call reduction of 24% and an increase of 31% in online form submissions as a result of improving digital offers. The team has also focussed on reducing the number of calls coming into the authority by using the automated telephony system functionality to signpost callers requiring District Council help and not County Council services. This has secured a reduction of 550 calls per month.

The Contact Centre has been the recipient of positive feedback from our customers:

A Customer View – 'Joan'



Thank youhelp me socialise and relieve my loneliness.

.....I am a new woman

.....I followed through with your suggestions and adviceFrom the people I have met this week, I have had loads of suggestions..... so I am prioritising

.....At the moment 'Kerry', I think I can cope with life and my needs without any further help from Social Services.....Thank you for all your efforts they have paid off.

..... I am learning how to enjoy life once again. That's all I really needed.

And from key external figures, Directors, Auditors and key partners across the year:

- John Bolton, consultant and advisor to the LGA's Adult Social Care Efficiency Programme commented – 'most Councils would bite SCC's hand off for this type of 'front door'

- OFSTED described the team as a ‘well-resourced professional service’. The Inspector was especially impressed with the feedback to referrers’ arrangements and the wide-ranging training which they haven’t seen in many inspections
- BBC Panorama researcher – ‘I am surprised at the depth of conversation our advisors have with customers’
- Director of Adults Social Care Stephen Chandler – ‘Excellent response, 100% compliance and positive feedback from SWAP’.

2.2 Business Intelligence [BI]

The team has been key in delivering the successful Troubled Families work by implementing a recovery plan in July which has seen an additional 1400 successful claims being identified securing £1.1m of reward grant to the Authority. This work has received significant praise from the Government which acknowledges robustness of the systems and processes put in place to support the claims.

OFSTED Children’s Inspection Monitoring Visit again highlighted the quality of the data and information that is provided to the service. In particular there was praise of the “deep dive” thematic reviews undertaken by BI.

The team continued with its exemplary record of completing all statutory returns and mandatory user surveys accurately and within timescales set by Government. As well as supporting Adults in the procurement of the new Adults case management system, work continues to ensure a smooth implementation of the new system.

The team’s contribution to the working of the authority continues with extensive data and support given to corporate teams and other financial/savings work. This included working with external consultants such as Peopletoo reviewing the use of high cost placements for Children Looked After as well as providing extensive demographic and service delivery data as part of the review and restructuring of the Council’s getset service. A refresh of the Council’s Business Plan and preparations and organisation of the Council’s Corporate Peer Review and return visit including the development of the position statement and microsite have also been key highlights.

Driving the use of data, customer insight and intelligence across the authority continues with the Somerset Intelligence website being heralded by a national researcher for its access and ease of use. Preparing updated Community Profiles in advance of the Local Elections which include Ward changes, supporting evidence-based commissioning through analysis used for the Library Review and getset as well as introducing significant improvements to reporting on Drug & Alcohol service data.

Engaging and listening to our residents and communities has also been high on our agenda having completed 58 consultations in 2018-19, which received close to 8,000 responses. The key consultations carried out include:

- Library Service Consultation.
- Extra Care Housing (Adult Social Care).
- Educational Psychologist Service.
- Schools (Admissions and Term dates).
- Drugs and Alcohol Partnership Service Contract
- Sexual Health Services

2.3 Customer Experience & Information Governance

We undertook the successful joining of the Information Governance Team [Data protection, Data Subject Access Rights and Records Management] with the Customer Experience and Freedom of Information teams to enable MTFP saving of one Service Manager post whilst continuing to provide statutory services.

The service continues to seek efficiency and drive effective working practice through the digitalisation of the Data Subject Access Rights process to improve response times and modernise our approach and reduce costs. Overall the services saw a slight increase in the percentage for in-target responses on FOI requests for 2018/19 compared with 2017/18.

Currently the Annual Reports for Customer Feedback including complaints and compliments are being compiled for publication late Summer which will continue to show our commitment to listening and learning to our customers and seeking to respond and tackle complaints early before they escalate.

The service has also successfully challenged a draft Ombudsman decision regarding a complaint which saved the council in excess of £2000 and increased the Customer Experience Team involvement in managing customers who display unacceptable or unreasonably persistent behaviour which has resulted in capacity benefits for the team and services.

2.4 Communications

Some excellent work this year continuing to support services in key areas such as fostering and adoption campaigns, to improve our social media presence and impact and to work with partners such as health to support their own campaigns. Some key achievements include:

- Increasing social media presence in March alone saw:
 - Twitter followers = 10,684 Facebook likes = 5,751
 - World Social Work Day:
 - Twitter – 2k video views, 350 engagements, 200 likes & 62 retweets
 - Facebook – 3.5k video views and 1,100 engagement
 - Weather events drives customers to our output and for instance highways saw the Travel Somerset page visited 31,000 in 36 hours during snow this year.

It is important to emphasise the work the communication team produces to

support key priorities for the council, such as adults and children's social work recruitment.

This year the team has promoted a variety of campaign and objectives including:

- A new Yeovil College/University of Gloucestershire social worker degree course, Step Up to Social Work and other general recruitment activity. Pulled together 'awards' to mark World Social Work Day, then used it to successfully create social media output – celebrating success and good practice for the services (children and adults) and tying it all into recruitment push and getting really positive engagement.
- Another area of support has seen the promotion online and in media and Your Somerset of the Talking Café/Promoting Independence agenda.

A highlight of the support offered to boost fostering recruitment saw more than 50 staff take part in the Yeovil Half Marathon raising sponsorship and awareness in branded team vests.

The team has supported the Clinical Commissioning Group with its transformation "Health and Care Strategy" and promoted the Fit for My Future engagement campaign.

2.5 Digital & Digital Customer

Our focus this year has been on designing and developing a new set of websites inhouse that have been well received and well used. Some of the more notable sites are:

Volunteering <https://volunteering.somerset.gov.uk/>

Local Offer <https://choices.somerset.gov.uk/025/>

Leaving Care <https://www.somersetcareleavers.org.uk/>

Digital interactions with the Council continue to rise with an impressive 1.6 million visits and 4.3 million page views to the main site this year. To ensure that we continue with digital and self-serve interactions the team has also built the foundations and worked with our services and customers to co-produce, redesign and refresh the main SCC website which is set to be launched in May 2019.

The Digital Team has also turned its attention to promoting the Digital Offer in the authority with signing of the Government Digital Declaration Fund which provides digital training and shared resources and learning across Local Authorities as well exploring new joint digital commissioning projects for the benefit of us and others. The team is also taking a lead role in the new and exciting Digital Customer Initiative being launched under the SCC Transforming Lives Programme.

3. Background Papers

3.1

- <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk>
- <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/sinepost.html>
- Customer Experience: <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/have-your-say/complaints-comments-and-compliments/complaints-comments-compliments/>

Note: For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author.