

Customer Services

Scrutiny Communities

12 March 2024



Somerset
Council

Customer Service Performance – 2024



- **609,018 calls**
- **79% resolved at first point of contact**
(increase by 5% from 2023)

- **Target for average wait time is 5 minutes**
 - **Safeguarding is under 40 secs**
- **Queues with biggest challenges**
 - **Council Tax – Back office on legacy systems**
 - **Adults – peaks in demand, staff turnover**



- **13038 customer surveys completed**
- **84.77% satisfaction**

Welcome BOT

- ❖ **88% to the right place**
- ❖ **Remaining 12%:**
 - **No long queue options**
 - **Caller to a queue in under 1 minute**
 - **Where BOT doesn't recognise customer speaks to an advisor**



- **559 social media enquiries answered**
- **8,580 website Contact Us forms received**
- **156,151 Emails**
- **2,174 Web messenger enquiries**
- **Response time within 24 hours**



**Customer
Service Point**

29,203 visitors - Percentage in each area - 28% Bridgwater, 27% Taunton, 23% Shepton Mallet, 20% Yeovil

- **Converted 5 Customer Service Points to Customer Access Points**
- **Digital First approach in all CSP**



**Customer
Access Point**

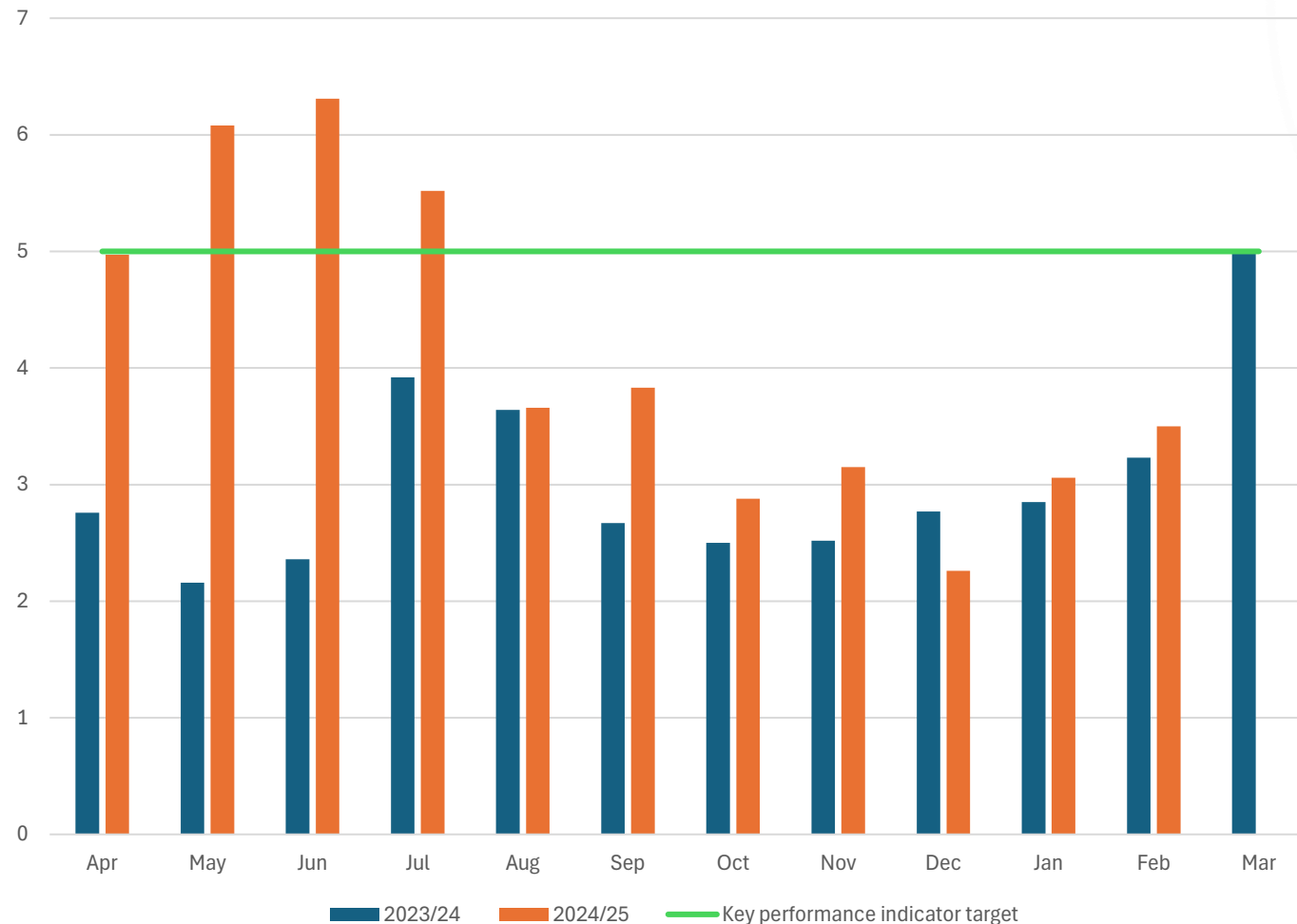
Top 8 services January 24 - December 24

Service Name	Volume	% Volume	Avg Wait	Avg Handle
Revenues & Benefits (Inc. Capita)	175831	29%	00:05:24	00:10:19
General Enquiries	88009	14%	00:02:50	00:06:09
Housing	72545	12%	00:05:16	00:09:01
Waste	57319	9%	00:04:58	00:07:51
Adults	40320	7%	00:06:18	00:18:13
Childrens	36202	6%	00:01:56	00:11:21
Registration Services	21534	4%	00:03:21	00:05:53
Highways	20506	3%	00:02:09	00:09:56

- During periods of high demand or limited resources, there may be instances where a maximum wait time occasionally exceeds one hour.
- Complex queue system, our teams are still dealing with legacy processes, with back offices are not aligned.
- Our current resources are not in the right areas so encouraging staff to learn another area where we have pressure to build more resilience, such as Adults.

Call wait times

Average call wait times



Demand/Resources

- September 2023 – Local Government Reform funding for 7 staff was removed
- March 2024 - 75% increase in calls for Council Tax due to Annual Billing
- May/June 2024 - General Election unexpected peaks in demand
- Summer 2024 - high staff turn-over

Mitigations

- Prioritise safeguarding calls
- Customers are single handled more with less transfers between queues
- Working with services to reduce pressures
- Multi contact handling and multi skilling staff to build more resilience over priority queues
- Channel shift approach to reduce demand on calls where customer services don't add value

Digital First – what does this mean to our customers

- Where a service can be delivered through a digital solution and customer services add no value, we will strongly encourage our customers to use this channel, suggesting help from relatives, trusted friend or using our Customer Service Points (CSPs) or Customer Access Points (CAPs)
- For some services, the telephony channel maybe removed in favour of the digital one.
- A mediated service will exist for those customers not able to access digital solutions and a robust Equalities Impact Assessment will be completed for each decision made.
- This frees up customer services time deal to with the most vulnerable customers and services such as Adults Social care, Children's Social Care, Housing, Benefits and Council Tax.

Successes so far:

Waste services: Used ability to push text (SMS) link to customer's phone. Conversations about the using online to try and change customer behaviours. Channel shift has increase from 67% in November 2023 to as high as nearly 88% in June 2024, over 30,000 calls moved to online

Payments: Fully compliant (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard) payments can now **only** be taken via Automated Telephony Payment or online. Exceptional payment process in place.

Customer Service Points (CSP): Focused on self-serve. A space to promote and support customers to use digital channels. 20% of footfall in our CSP now using self-serve.

Customer Service Points converted to Customer Access Points: Digital support in locations to support use of Video Assistant Live (VAL). VAL calls target is to answer within 10 minutes. Saving 4.76 staff.

Deliver a ***New Ways of Working (NWOW) plan*** detailing how Customer Services, working alongside Council services, will transform the contact channels that customers of Somerset Council will use to access services at the front door.

With a focus on 'digital first' delivery set out in the Council's [Customer](#) and [Digital](#) strategies, the NWOW plan will identify efficiencies in delivery, utilising new and existing technologies.

Four areas of focus

Digital First/Channel shift opportunities to drive self-help and reduce demand for the service.

Service Standard & Quality - length of call, wait time, failure demand, where the handoff between first point of contact and service lies.

Do more at the front door/grow the service- What can Customer Services take on as a more cost-effective model of delivery that is better for the customer and the service. Increasing income and releasing savings in services.

Increase our own efficiency – Restructure, Functional leads, building capacity in right areas to bring more resilience, skills matrix and more fluid approach to resources, AI technology.

Work has already started in many areas but delivery plans and overall programme plan are currently being developed.

Challenges for 2025

- Council Tax billing
- Impact of organisational restructure
- Risk of increase in failure demand
- Alignment of legacy Local Government Reorganisation queues
- Staff retention - Loss of experienced staff to other services
- Contact Centre architecture procurement exercise
- Advisor burnout over high demand months March to July
- End of Capita contract September 2025 and return of Revenues and Benefits service in Mendip area
- Revenues and Benefits system consolidation project
- Unplanned spikes in demand – weather
- Creating a strong digital first approach culture within the organisation