London Borough of Enfield

Report Title	*Update on Customer Service Performance*
Report to	*Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee*
Date of Meeting	*16/01/2024*
Cabinet Member	*Councillor Tim Leaver/Councillor Ergin Erbil*
Executive Director / Director	*Simon Pollock, Executive Director of Environment & Communities; Eleanor Brown, Director of Customer & Communications*
Report Author	*Lee Shelsher Head of Customer Solutions*
Ward(s) affected	*All*
Classification	*Part 1 Public*
Reason for exemption	*N/A*

Purpose of Report

1. To update the panel on Customer Service performance data from last Finance & Performance Scrutiny Panel March 2023; to include self-serve, council website analytics, bounce rates, customer experience, contact centre, and library hubs.

Main Considerations for the Panel

2. The Customer Service team in reference to above and this report relates to the library service, community hubs, contact centre, webchat, web team and chatbot. In addition to these services the team also deliver the archive service. The budget for these services totalled £4.2m in FY2023/24 and an additional £0.3m of savings is marked for delivery during this financial year.

3. This report includes Key Performance Indicator (KPI) data, learning from successes, challenges, an example of using customer experience data and expertise to drive improvements to a universally accessed Council service, and future improvement plans centred around innovation and aspiration regarding customer service.

4. The Customer Service team are on a continuous journey to improve our front door services and influence customer experience across the organisation. We use data (including customer & employee feedback) to drive an evidence-led approach, refining our delivery models and shaping future approaches. For example, a recent project to improve our telephony platform is part of the technical infrastructure required to realise our omni-channel ambition whereby customers use their "channel of choice" to contact us, whilst also increasing our self-serve channel shift to enable 24/7 customer convenience and best value for the organisation.

5. We aim to always create a "digital by desire" approach where residents are moving to online solutions, enabling agents to resolve more complex enquiries or spending time supporting digital exclusion.

6. We consistently work towards a balance of customer expectation versus delivery. Since last year's report, key customer service successes include:
   - Library physical visits increased since Covid due to cost of living, warm space initiative etc (face to face customer enquiries) but equally an increase in online interactions of 52%
   - 12% decrease in telephony enquiries and an increase in online enquiry channels (webchat and website)
   - Launch of new chatbot functionality, built within the in-house Web Team (no external supplier costs) enabling better use of online chat agent time to support more complex enquiries. 67,000 chats since launch.

7. From an external perspective, it is clear that organisations continue to struggle when meeting customers' expectations post pandemic. Regarding contact centres, the Contact Centre Management Association (CCMA) that supports contact centres from all industries, stated in a recent report "*In 2023 the proportion of those who believe customer service is worsening (34%) is now almost double the proportion of those who believe service is improving (18%)*"[1].

8. However, we are delighted to advise that unlike the wider context, we can report positive progress in this area. In response to our surveys including questions such as "The call agent understood my issue and was keen to help", ratings have increased from 69% to 71% from Q1 to Q2 2023/24. Additionally, the team receive regular compliments for their customer service delivery and empathy to customer need.

9. There is still room for improvement and further investment is required in technology, processes and people to continue these developments and realise our customer service ambitions for Enfield Council.

---

[1] See embedded report 'CCMA' in appendix

10. The Committee may also be aware that a library service engagement is currently underway to ensure our libraries, being a statutory service are "comprehensive and efficient for the future"[2]

Background and Options

Libraries & Community Hubs

11. Contributing to many Council and national priorities such as strong, healthy and safe communities, thriving children and young people, an economy that works for everyone; these two services facilitate a high proportion of the Council's face to face customer enquiries. Together, they work with over 100 partners, activating over 10,000 volunteering hours to deliver initiatives that range from mental and physical health support, skills and employment, to ICT literacy and family/children matters.

12. Recent library successes include the GLA-funded library at Fore Street which was awarded two industry recognised design awards for its regeneration and community facilitation contributions. Using S106 and CIL funding, we have delivered a new sensory space supporting speech and language, sensory needs and dementia; created a makerspace facility for local creators and entrepreneurs which has received extremely positive use of 183 sessions since April 23 and feedback from small businesses, schools and makers alike.

13. The library service also receives income from initiatives such as Visa Verification, trusted by Central Government to deliver high quality transactions for people all over the UK and influencing their visit to the borough.

14. Community Hubs deliver an early intervention/prevention programme with partners, supporting employment and skills, family support and money matters whilst signposting to health initiatives for a holistic approach to finding solutions for residents. See table on the next page for recent outcomes:

---

[2] Libraries as a statutory service - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Examples	Results
Quantitative Community hubs hold Tea & Toast (T&T) sessions. The purpose of tea and toast is about connecting people to preventative help and partners, that feed into system and strategic understanding and planning, whilst strengthening community across people of all ages, ethnicities, communities, socio-economic boundaries.	Since April 23 there have been 1,423 attendees and they have received support from 47 partners offering Information, advice and guidance, resulting in: • 35 people have been seen by the Welfare and Debt advice team and supported to maximise benefits, consolidate debt, and reduce council related debt. • 250 people have received information about how to adapt their home to prevent untimely falls and hospitalisation and stay well at home. • 223 people were referred into Jobs and Skills support through STEP, our jobs and skills partner. 84 of these were Roma Bulgarian.
Qualitative	• 94% felt that T&T had improved their mental health • 97% felt more socially connected as a result of tea and toast. • 94% said they would come back to the T&T sessions.
Financial, health and social benefit example - diabetes	The Diabetes Clinic through our partnership screened 261 members of the public: • 53 (20% of those screened) found to be at risk of diabetes and advised to see their GP. • The estimated annual cost saving by identifying 53 people and helping them early is £93,545 (source - Public Health Intelligence, Enfield)

15. Key Performance Indicators

	FY22/23	FY23/24 (projected)	Comments
Total Library physical visits	1,003,868 **Target 950K**	1,200,000	FY23/24 April-Oct shows a 19% increase in library visitor numbers compared to previous year
Total Library digital use e-Newspaper/e-books and e-magazines	1,424,211	2,000,000	FY23/24 April to October shows a 52% rise in many library e-offer deliverables compared to previous year
Total Community Hub visitor numbers	41,495 **Target 42K**	50,000	FY23/24 April to October shows a 24% rise in Hub visitor numbers compared to previous year. Visits split: Enfield Town 53%; Edmonton 47%
Total Food Pantry visits	Monthly average 126 monthly visits (Oct 22 pantries established)	Monthly average 124 visits	Visits split: Enfield Town 40%; Edmonton 60%

Customer Contact Centre and Webchat

16. The Customer Contact Centre handles all incoming calls to Enfield Council's main telephone number (0208 379 1000) and online chat enquiries via the website. A first-tier general enquiry/second tier Housing Advisory contact centre, agents handle all initial enquiries and where possible provide first contact and triage solution before transferring these to back office services if necessary. Not all customer calls are handled by the Contact Centre. For example, Council Housing Repairs go directly to a call centre within Housing & Regeneration Division. The majority of Housing Advisory (e.g. homelessness) calls are referred to the Housing Advisory Service call centre also within the Housing & Regeneration Division. Council tax and benefit enquiries are handled through an outsourced contact centre.

17. Since the previous report, multiple digital transformation projects have underpinned performance improvements within the Contact Centre. Namely embedding the Council's new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Content Management System (CMS); new customer satisfaction system implementation & adoption; replacing the Council's customer-facing telephony platform; creating chatbot functionality to answer simple customer enquiries online.

18. Coupled with improvements to both processes and staff development, we are now starting to see demonstrable evidence of customer enquiry channel shift with reduced call volumes as per the figures below:

	FY22/23	FY23/24 (projected)	Comments
No. of telephone calls	230,127	200,000	FY23/24 April-Oct shows a 13% decrease in call volumes compared to previous year

19. This is primarily due to:
    - A successful proactive channel shift mechanism in place whereby the Telephony Agents guide the caller through the self-serve capabilities of the improved web offer. This is possible due to functionality delivered by the new customer platform/dashboard allowing agents to recognise the webpages the customer is using and guide them accordingly ie "Please push the button in front of you, that's great you have completed the transaction". This approach supports the customer to self-serve online next time rather than calling the contact centre.
    - Customer feedback regarding the website's performance is used by the Web Team to make further improvements as later KPIs within this report will demonstrate.
    - Improvements to webchat functionality including chatbot automation introduced in November 22, has established Webchat as a complimentary contact channel for the customer. Services within Enfield Council such as Electoral, Housing Repairs have been included in this channel of choice through Customer Services.
    - Payment webforms have increased online payments and customer self-serve which has increased by 7%.Customers are offered an ICT course or support within libraries and community hubs to support digital literacy.

20. Supporting our customers to increase their online communication with us is important. Firstly, we know from the CCMA that post pandemic, there has been an increase in digital customer communication with organisations, allowing the customer to make requests, report issues etc, at a time and using contact channels that are most convenient to them. Secondly, it enables the Council to use its staff in a more cost effective and efficient way. Simple enquiries are handled electronically, freeing up staff time to focus on supporting our more vulnerable customers and complex enquiries.

21. An example of this is our Community Support line which handles enquiries relating to the cost-of-living crisis and recently (Integrated Care and Equipment Service), which has seen a dramatic increase in customer calls compared to the previous year. During 2022/23, 7,048 calls were received. However, the predicted volume for 2023/24 is 21,000 calls as between April – Oct 23 there was a 220% increase in call volumes compared to the same time period of the previous year. Despite this increase in calls, there has not been an increase in call wait times and the

answer rate has remained at nearly 90%. This is due to digital channel shift in customer enquiries elsewhere, freeing up agents to successfully handle the community support calls.

22. Telephony Key Performance Indicators

	23/24 (Year to Date)	Target	Comments
Answer rate	89%	80%	This includes impacts of *in year* savings made at Telephony Agent level (we are now 6 FTE lower on Telephony Agents compared to the start of the previous Financial Year), whilst achieving our set customer satisfaction targets for both channels Telephony and Webchat.
Average Wait Time (for calls to be answered)	2min53sec	3min	

23. Further performance improvements are anticipated in Q4 since the new telephony platform went live at the end of Oct 23. November's early indicators have demonstrated the following performances:
- Answer rate: Year to Date (YTD) 89% vs Month to Date (MTD) 92%
- Average wait time: (YTD) 2:53mins vs (MTD) 1:16mins
- Same day call back wait times: Sept 23 average 5h27mins vs Nov 23 average 3hrs06mins

24. Channel shift has also enabled capacity to deliver new business for Enfield Council services such as STEP (Skills Training Employment Pillar) to support outbound campaigns for members and users around their journey progress and ICES (Integrated Care and Equipment Service) to support customers with responsive kit.

25. Webchat Key Performance Indicators

	FY22/23	FY23/24 (projected)	Comments
Total no. of webchats	62,688	69,000	FY23/24 April-Oct shows a 35% increase in uptake of webchat channel by customers compared to previous year. NB these figures include chatbot answers
Total no. of chatbot chats (automated)	12,649	19,584 (YTD)	Proportion of chatbot chats have increased from an average of 38% last year to 48% this year.

26. Our webchat capability allows several conversations to happen at once ensuring effective use of human resources and finding a solution for the customer quicker. The Web Team have also built an in-house Chatbot that using existing web software guides the customer to the resource on the website. For example, the customer types "bin not collected" and the Chatbot will search keywords and present the customer with the form on the web to complete. This type of software will grow as we progress further automation solutions for customer channel choice. See Aspirations later in the report.

27. The above figures show a clear channel shift to online customer interactions. This was enabled through the introduction of a new Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) in March 2022. Development of in-house technical expertise within the Web Team and new functionality from both the CRM & CMS have also supported greater customer self-service online and a subsequent reduction in call volumes. This outcome was acknowledged with an industry award for Citizen Engagement and has become a Local Authority case study in Customer Experience design.

Customer Satisfaction – Contact Centre

28. In October 2022, we implemented a new customer feedback tool called GovMetric for telephony, website & webchat, SMS and email to better capture customer feedback regarding their customer experience and the service they received. This feedback spans both the Contact Centre and services across the organisation (e.g. residential waste collections), providing end-to-end customer feedback regarding their interactions with us as an organisation for the first time.

29. An essential tool for data-led improvements, GovMetric drives a continual service improvement focus, identifying detailed customer feedback and trends. This insight is used to address concerns & improve our customer journeys end to end.

30. To ensure a comprehensive customer voice, high numbers of customer survey responses are key. GovMetric has increased customer feedback volumes significantly compared to the previous tool as demonstrated on the next page:

Average Monthly Customer Survey Volumes

2022= Before Govmetric
2023= Post Govmetric Go Live
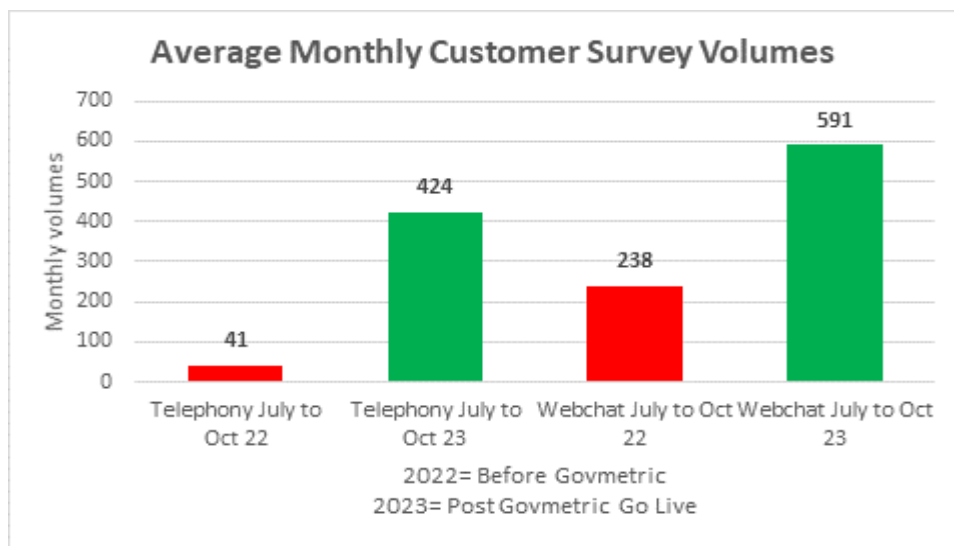
31. This increased response rate allows us to refine what we do before enquiries escalate to complaints, as well as implementing solutions which avoid repetition in the future thereby reducing failure demand.

32. For the Contact Centre, GovMetric provides detailed feedback, which is used to improve call agent performance monitoring, identify knowledge gaps and refines training whilst improving average handling time. It is also used to increase morale and motivation as high performers are identified and celebrated (to date over 20 compliments regarding individual agents have been received).

33. Feedback has informed website and content improvements as well as implementation of new digital systems such as the recent telephony platform.

34. Lastly, data has been used to improve service provision such as Waste and Planning customer experience. In the future, there are opportunities to use GovMetric across other services to improve Council-wide customer experience standards.

35. Key Performance Indicators

	23/24 (Year to Date)	Target	Comments
Telephony customer satisfaction	70%	70%	Customer satisfaction at the start of the financial year was at 67% (against a target of 70%) and increased to 71% in Oct 2023. NB: this includes call handling outside of contact centre when calls are transferred to back office services.

Webchat customer satisfaction	85%	80%	KPI target increased for 23/24. Performance has improved quarter-on-quarter, peaking at 90% in Oct 23

And we can ask more pertinent questions to drill down into focussed areas:-

Web Chat	Total	🙂	😐	🙁	Overall rating
Number of respondents	410	313	41	56	🙂
Percentage of respondents		76.34%	10%	13.66%	Good

Website

36. The Council's new website was launched in March 2022, after working with customers, stakeholders and service users to create a far better experience alongside the Customer Relationship Management system. Our vision has always been to support customers to find information easier and then action faster. The website is currently rated 8/10 by Sitemorse, an improvement from 5/10 with the previous website and is a cross industry standard measurement.

37. The website has also become a space for campaigns and for people to get involved such as the recent cost of living content to enable residents to find support, warm spaces and others to volunteer. Over 70% of users told us that as a result of the website, they better understood how to obtain cost of living support and did so.

38. We are ambitious to achieve Web Content Accessibility and to be critiqued by organisations such as the Shaw Trust to strive towards accreditation. This an extremely sought after accreditation and important to accessibility as the testers involved review from the perspective of many user disabilities such as visual impairment.

39. We are also reducing the web estate, grown over many years and sometimes in silo. This will reduce what are known as 'microsites' which not only will deliver financial savings, but will also contribute towards the Council's branding standardisation, online access and user experience.

40. Since the Council's new website went live in March 22, the Web Team has successfully launched an additional 8 new or migrated microsites or offshoots to the main website. Bringing these sites in-house improves the user experience, reduces costs and brings the sites under governance and best practices for accessibility, search engine optimisation and performance. These include:

   - Fostering and Permanence
   - Educational Psychology Service

- Safeguarding Enfield
- Housing Gateway
- Joyce and Snells Regeneration
- LGPS Pensions website
- Health and Wellbeing

41. Additionally, the web team **retired** the following offsites since Mar 22 to reduce cost and complexity of the digital estate:

- Enfield Innovations
- Enjoy Enfield
- Enfield Strategic Partnership
- Build Enfield
- Improving Enfield
- Whitewebbs
- CEPN Training Hub
- Enfield Youth
- Social Care Centre of Excellence

42. Further sites are under development to be launched before the end of the fiscal year:
- Informed Families (Children's social care)

Website Key Performance Indicators

43. **Total cases submitted via the website:** Since the website's launch and coupled with digital infrastructure improvements through the new CRM, customers are using our website more to submit their enquiries. Comparing a 6 month period pre and post launch, there has been a growth in 7% as per the table below:

Apr - Sep 23	Apr - Sep 22	Difference
147,905	138,165	7%

Customer Satisfaction: As mentioned previously under Customer Satisfaction, GovMetric feedback is used to improve our website functionality. Negative website feedback is reducing. With just under 5 million page views this year, we've received 3137 pieces of feedback (0.06% of total views).

44. **Time spent on website:** Website visitors are finding what they need quicker and spending less time on the site completing their tasks. Both average length of visits and pages views reduced over a six-month period year on year as per the table below:

	Mar - Aug 23	Mar - Aug 22	Difference
Avg. Session Duration (mins)	02:18	02:26	-5.3%
Pages per session	2.33	2.43	-3.9%

45. **Bounce rate:** The website's overall bounce rate is currently **28.6%. This is compared to the old website's bounce rate of 39.6%.** Some notable improvements are listed below comparing 6 month periods. These pages are in the top 10 most visited pages on the website.

Bounce rate	Mar - Aug 23	Mar - Aug 22	Difference
Barrowell Green Recycling Centre	31.1%	46.5%	-33.1%
Council tax	9.7%	10.5%	-7.6%
Planning register	14.0%	39.0%	-64.0%
Jobs and careers	16.0%	17.0%	-5.8%
Pay a PCN	15.4%	38.5%	-60.0%
Bulky rubbish collection	29.9%	31.5%	-5.2%
Rubbish and recycling	7.0%	20.3%	-65.4%

46. **Webform/Web Payment numbers:** The table below shows a 7% increase in the number of customers currently using webforms and online payments compared to the previous year. This is an increase in customers self-serving online without contact centre agent assistance.

	FY22/23	FY23/24 (projected)	Comments
Total no. of webforms completed	275,113	295,000	FY23/24 April-Oct shows a 7 % increase in the uptake of completed Webforms compared to previous year.

Case Study: Improving Customer Experience - Residential Waste Collections

47. The following case study is an example of where both data and expertise from Customer Services supported a multi-disciplinary approach across the Council to create tangible improvements to the customer experience of residential waste collections.

48. During 2021/22, complaints analysis for waste services identified a growing increase in missed bin collection complaints over a three-year period.

49. Changes to collection frequency, introduction of paid garden waste collections, and challenges to service delivery during the pandemic contributed towards these volumes. For example, many customers had higher expectations when paying for garden waste collections in addition to

their council tax payments; when missed, fortnightly collections left residents with full bins for longer compared to weekly collections.

50. However, many complaints related to repeat missed collections over long time periods the cause of which was unknown. Consequently, a project was established to understand what was happening, why and how to resolve it. This was a multi-disciplinary team involving waste services, customer services, transformation and digital services. Call and online chat data, customer feedback, complaints and data from the website was triangulated with frontline staff shadowing and observations to identify the root cause and design solutions to address this. The project also designed and implemented other solutions to improve the customer experience for refuse collections.

51. As a result of these improvements:
   - Repeat missed bin complaints are at all time low falling from 49 monthly average in 2021 to 9 monthly average in 2023.
   - Increased customer satisfaction with how we've handled and resolved missed bin collections with overall increase in meeting customer expectations increasing by 3% from Q1 to Q2 in 2023/24June to July 23
   - Fewer customers are calling us multiple times to report a missed bin – reducing failure demand. In 2021/22 we received 1,907 avoidable customer calls. Since removal of 4pm rule in Nov 22, during 22/23 this dropped to 1,275.
   - Missed bin MEQs are decreasing. The monthly average between Jan 22 to Sept 22 and Jan – Sept 23 has fallen by 40% from 15 to 9 per month respectively. Although there have been some peaks and troughs over the past 9 months.
   - Since Oct 22 to Sept 23:
     o Repeat missed bin collections (all waste streams) has reduced from 401 to 271.
     o Repeat missed garden waste collections have reduced from 64 to 23.
     o Quarterly number of missed bin collections have reduced from 4,650 (0.19%) to 2,922 (0.12%)
     o Quarterly garden waste missed bin collections have reduced from 729 (0.38%) to 415 (0.22%)

Unified Communications Technology, Tools and Future Aspirations

52. The past 12 months have seen a number of digital customer experience projects begin delivering tangible improvements across Customer Services. These have contributed towards the increase in performance outlined in this report.

53. An example of this is the Unified Communications project, which completed its first phase in October 23 by replacing the telephony platform and call handling systems for the Contact Centre, Council Housing Repairs call centre and the IT Service Desk call centre. The new telephony systems went live on 25th October 2023.

54. The previous telephony platform (ININ) used by the contact and call centres above were 'end of life' and had to be replaced.

55. This also presented an opportunity to upgrade the technology we use to handle customer calls thereby improving the customer and staff experience as well as increase the stability of our digital infrastructure by moving to a cloud-based system.

56. Phase 1 is a proof of concept to trial the new technology before undertaking procurement for council-wide telephony. New functionality driving performance improvement in the Contact Centre includes:

    - Cloud hosted for service quality and continuity
    - New wallboard for manager and agent status awareness
    - New gamification dashboard to show how agents are performing
    - Allocation of call queues to individual agents and call back allocation for effective call handling

Wider Ambition

57. The project will soon be entering its second phase with procurement completing in Oct 24. The aim is to rationalise our telephony platforms to realise revenue savings as well as improving the customer experience end-to-end by monitoring calls from the contact centres through to the back-office conclusion.

58. By creating one telephony platform for all of LBE's telephony systems, the following benefits will be achieved:
    - We can finally monitor customer calls from front to back offices and use this insight to improve customer experience end-to-end.
    - Better system integration will advance our 'single view of customer' ambition – one repository for customer contact & enquiry history.
    - Ability to translate conversations into different languages, reducing our reliance on external translation services.
    - When customers report an issue (website, online chat, telephony) investigation tasks are automatically created and sent to services for faster resolution.
    - Customers can communicate with us through additional channels including social media with lower-level enquiries managed by chatbots/automation.
    - We proactively tell customers when an issue occurs (rather than customers contacting us).

Next Steps

59. There are a number of ongoing initiatives and projects due for completion over the next 12 months, including the above Unified Communications project and consolidating our digital estate. We will also continue to embed recent capabilities such as enhanced customer feedback, tailoring agent training to improve performance and developing chatbot functionality.

60. In terms of new initiatives, in 2024/25 we will have the technical capability to track repeat customer contact. This is an important customer experience KPI which the organisation has not had the ability to track previously.

By understanding why customers are contacting us about the same issue or enquiry, we can design and implement improvements which resolve the enquiry first time and at first point of contact. This will avoid repeat contact in the future, thereby reducing failure demand. This results in a better customer experience as well as a more efficient use of staff time and resource allocation (both in the Contact Centre and in the back-office services).

61. The Web Team is working with Digital Services to scope out further development of AI and automation of our CRM. Further investment in this area will support the opening of more customer communication channels and the efficiencies these unlock. For example, if a customer prefers to tweet about a fly tip in Turkey Street, CRM finds this information logs it, sends it to the relevant service to resolve and then returns a tweet that the action is in hand.

Relevance to Council Plans and Strategies

62. Overall Customer Service contributes towards the Council Plan priority – Accessible and Responsive Services. Improving customer experience through our processes, people and technology contributes towards a positive experience for our customers and residents when interacting with the Council through the Contact Centre, Libraries and Community Hubs. We also use our data and expertise to support services across the organisation to improve their service provision with better customer service.

63. Clean and green places: Customer services provide spaces to discuss issues and find solutions such as libraries and community hubs. Libraries are already signed up to the Libraries Green Manifesto.

64. Strong, healthy and safe communities: Libraries and community hubs working with partners to support "health on the high street" around delivery of activities, advice and guidance for all matters relating to physical and mental health. We also facilitate social capital and partnerships in spaces such as the Public Living Room Library, welcoming groups such as REACT and Fore Street 4 All our contact centre works with Integrated Care and Equipment Service and community lines to support the Cost of Living agenda. Our website is there to provide both accessibly and quality information.

65. Thriving children and young people: We deliver education, resources, study space, activities and a safe building to learn from birth, with a class visit happening every day in an Enfield Library.

66. An economy that works for everyone: We offer skills and employment facilities throughout our buildings such as job clubs, CV writing, application and interview techniques and support STEPs in delivery of their service via telephony and webchat.

Report Author: Lee Shelsher
                      Head of Customer Solutions
                      Lee.shelsher@enfield.gov.uk
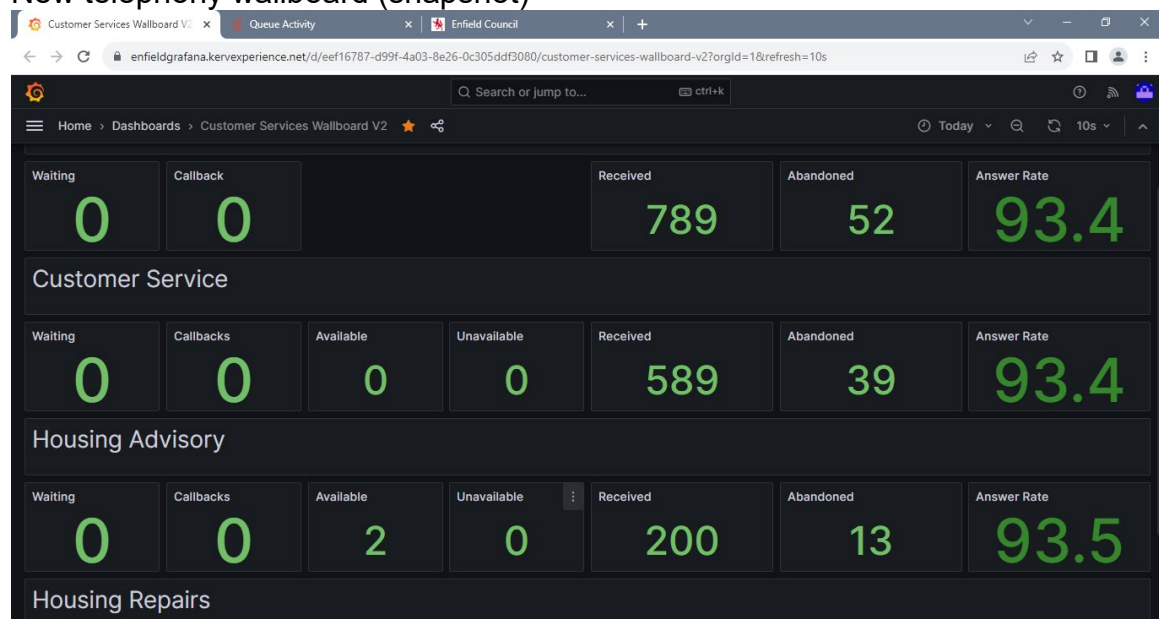   07967787359

Appendices

Useful links

Makerspace
https://www.enfield.gov.uk/news-and-events/2023/08/makerspace-project-provides-opportunities-for-creative-residents

New telephony wallboard (snapshot)

CCMA Report

CCMA-Voice-of-the-C
ontact-Centre-Consum