

# Resources Scrutiny Commission

20<sup>th</sup> February 2017



**Report of:** Patsy Mellor - Service Director Citizen Services

**Title:** Channel Shift

**Ward:** Citywide

**Officer Presenting Report:** Rizwan Tariq – Head of Citizen Services  
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## Recommendation

1. To note the current approach to channel shift
2. Use available data to manage demand, reduce failure, inform service redesign and serve the remaining customers through digital channels where possible, reducing overall contact as a whole. This report refers to contact received through Citizen Services not corporately

## Summary

1. There is evidence of channel shift from telephone and face-to-face to the web.
2. Uptake of web services varies from service to service, dependent on the service offering and functionality. It is the role of the service to adopt Channel Shift priorities with support from ICT and Citizen Services where appropriate
3. Channel shift opportunities detailed outline current opportunities available, further development of channel shift is dependent on BCC adopting and continuing a channel shift strategy



## Context

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the channels used by citizens to contact the council through Citizen Services. It is not intended to give a corporate view of channel shift or the approach in other areas.

Citizen Services provides citizen contact handling for a large volume of contacts into Bristol City Council but not for all, this report will only focus on contact through Citizen Services as this is where there are mechanisms in place to record volumes and trends.

Citizen Services built a Target Operating Model (TOM) in 2015/16 which recognised it needed to respond and adapt to ensure it continued to improve its customer service offering to citizens. With reducing budgets, the challenge was to improve and automate contact where possible. With the uptake and increasing volume of online services, Citizen Services focussed on delivering excellence digitally, enabling self-service and delivering telephone and face-to-face access to those who needed it.

The key challenge was to maximise the online offering, driving 80% of the contact onto self-service or assisted digital channels by 2017. This was to be supported by a single contact centre with staff enabled to handle all calls through cross-training, citizen face-to-face service points integrated with community hubs and/or libraries where possible. In the interim, by summer 2016, the contact centre would cross-train contact centre staff to increase the number of services they delivered and reducing from 9 silo teams to 4 cross-trained teams.

To achieve this simplified technology for citizen advisors and citizens to use will be required, as well as knowledge management, using the right performance measures and reporting. Automation and integration were seen as cornerstones for this, with end to end processes being delivered digitally as much as possible without requiring intervention.

## Achievements to date

Citizen Services was successful in delivering the following interim outcomes:

- 4 cross-teams set up by citizen enquiry type (Housing, Revenues & Benefits, Streets and Protection)
- 100 Temple Street designed around the needs of the citizen
- New performance measures introduced, emphasising first contact resolution and quality of the transaction.
- An increase in digital take up and corresponding reduction in telephone calls to the contact centre for those services that have been partially digitised
  - o Local Tax calls down 17% (2014/15 to 2015/16)
  - o Benefits calls down 24%
  - o Births & Death registration appointment booking calls down 24%
  - o Travel card calls down 13%
- Corresponding increase in website sessions of 18% (2015-2016)

If we want our citizens to engage fully with us in relation to the services they need, then we have to give them the opportunity to do so. In order to achieve a shift to the digital channel is it necessary for this channel not just to enable citizens to do what they can currently do

through face to face or telephone contact but to also provide additional benefits through the digital channel.

Bristol City Council started upon this journey through the change programme, progress was incremental. Across the council, our online digital offer is improving, but it's not the main channel used by citizens. Many of our services have an online presence but little functionality.

From insight, we know Bristol is a connected city; our citizens are well set up to receive digital services:

- 79% of Bristol households have broadband and 92.7% of Bristol Households using the internet regularly.
- Bristol ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in the UK for average speed (with superfast broadband available to 94% of households)
- 83% of adults go online (98% of 16-34 year olds) (Source – OFCOM)
- 93% of adults have mobile phones of which 71% are smart phone users (Source – OFCOM)
- 52% of traffic to BCC website is via a mobile device (smartphone or tablet)
- Older people and disabled people usage of the intranet is growing year on year with 74% of people aged 65-74 and 71% of disabled people now regular users. (Source ONS report 2016)

We know that many of our citizens want to self-serve. Our website gets 4 million hits per year, and the digital services we've started to make available have been well received.

There has been a shift in the way citizens contact us, the biggest shift over the last year has been from more costly channel types (telephone and face to face) to the web.

Channel	2015/16	2016/2017 (Apr – Oct)
Telephone	78%	71%
Face to Face	15%	13%
Web	6%	16%
Email	1%	Less than 0.5%

Whilst the shift to web is encouraging, the uptake has varied from service to service, with the challenge being to digitise such a vast range of varied services.

Local Tax, Waste Services and Residents Parking have the best offering. Uptake for other services is lower as further investment and development is required to improve the digital offer, by increasing the availability of digital forms and their functionality.

The main success has been where digital services are fully integrated with the back office system so that there is no need for an intervention from staff; the two areas where there is end to end automation are Local Tax and Waste Services. Those services that are fully automated also make a saving as an intervention is not required, although up-front investment is required to enable this along with ongoing maintenance and support. Those services that are partially automated require an advisor to double key into the back office system.

## Approach

Delivering excellent digital services doesn't mean excluding those who cannot or will not self-serve, it means we should design for excellent digital assistance. The approach should be in the first instance to use available data to manage demand, reduce failure, inform service redesign and only serve the remaining citizens through digital channels, reducing overall contact as a whole.

Citizen Advisors in the contact centre and face-to-face service points heavily promote the digital channels where citizens are able to self-serve, this in turn creates capacity for them to spend more time with those citizens that are vulnerable or are unable to self-serve.

For those citizens that can, the following approach is used:

#### Face-to-Face

- Citizen Advisors signpost to those services that are available online.
- Provide assistance to those that are less confident with online services so that they can self-serve next time; continue this approach until they are confident to self-serve independently.
- Help citizens with digital enquiries even if not directly related to the council services, e.g. they will help a citizen set up an email address so that they can not only access council services but also digital services for other providers.

#### Telephone

- Signpost citizens to services available online especially where the citizen can track the progress online.
- Follow up any signposting with an email with the direct link.
- Removal of telephone numbers from the website.
- Promotion of online channels on telephone messages and social media (Twitter).

#### Back office / Service areas

- Targeting specific groups through leaflets, awareness and posters etc. where they are able to directly self-serve such as students for council tax.

In addition to promoting digital channels, Citizen Services also look at failure demand on a regular basis; Failure demand is a contact from a Citizen where they did not need to contact the council e.g. Citizens telephoning to find out next bin collection day (this information is readily available via the website). At the end of every call, the contact centre advisor logs the reason for the call, whether it was resolved at the first point of contact and if it the contact from the citizen could have been avoided altogether.

The contact centre team capture this information in a monthly report which is sent to Service Heads for the services delivered through Citizen Services. The contact centre management team also meets with each service area on a quarterly basis to discuss the demand on the service and explore ways of improving processes to reduce the need for the citizen to contact the council.

#### Next Steps

1. To continue with the current approach to shifting citizens from more costly channels to digital channels.
2. To actively use data to manage demand down, manage demand from failure and inform prioritisation of redesign of services.
3. Where possible, promote online as more digital services are updated.
4. Ensure information, advice and guidance pages on the website are adjusted to reflect seasonal demand and kept updated.

## Financial Implications

The cost to serve through digital services is less than traditional channels however there is an investment required to develop, run and maintain all digital channels.

## Legal Implications

Not applicable.

## Public Sector Equality Duties

5a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:

- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
- ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to -
  - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
  - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
  - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
  - tackle prejudice; and
  - promote understanding.

- 5b) The Scrutiny function plays an important part in assisting the Council in meeting its public sector equality duties and ensuring that the views of different communities and members of the public are taken into account in the development and delivery of services. Scrutiny work streams need to ensure that assessments of equalities impacts are an integral part of their work both in terms of scoping topics, gathering evidence and formulating recommendations.

## **Appendices**

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**