

June 2014 Executive - Matters Arising – Item 7:

“The Leader requested that in view of the number of telephone calls received by the Customer Service Centre, and the status of the indicators against abandoned calls and response times, a high level review be undertaken of the service with feedback to be made to the Executive in July. The Strategic Director Resources undertook to action this request”

CRM DATA

Introduction

All customer contacts to the CSC are recorded in CRM. As well as information about the customer and what they were contacting about, the system also records the method, referred to as “channel”, by which the contact occurred.

The numbers of contacts recorded in CRM will naturally differ to the number of phone calls because one phone call can require multiple CRM contacts to be logged; for example, each of paying rent and council tax would be recorded separately in CRM, even when done in one phone call.

This has allowed an analysis of the customer demand between April 2011 and May 2014 by both the channel and the service requested:

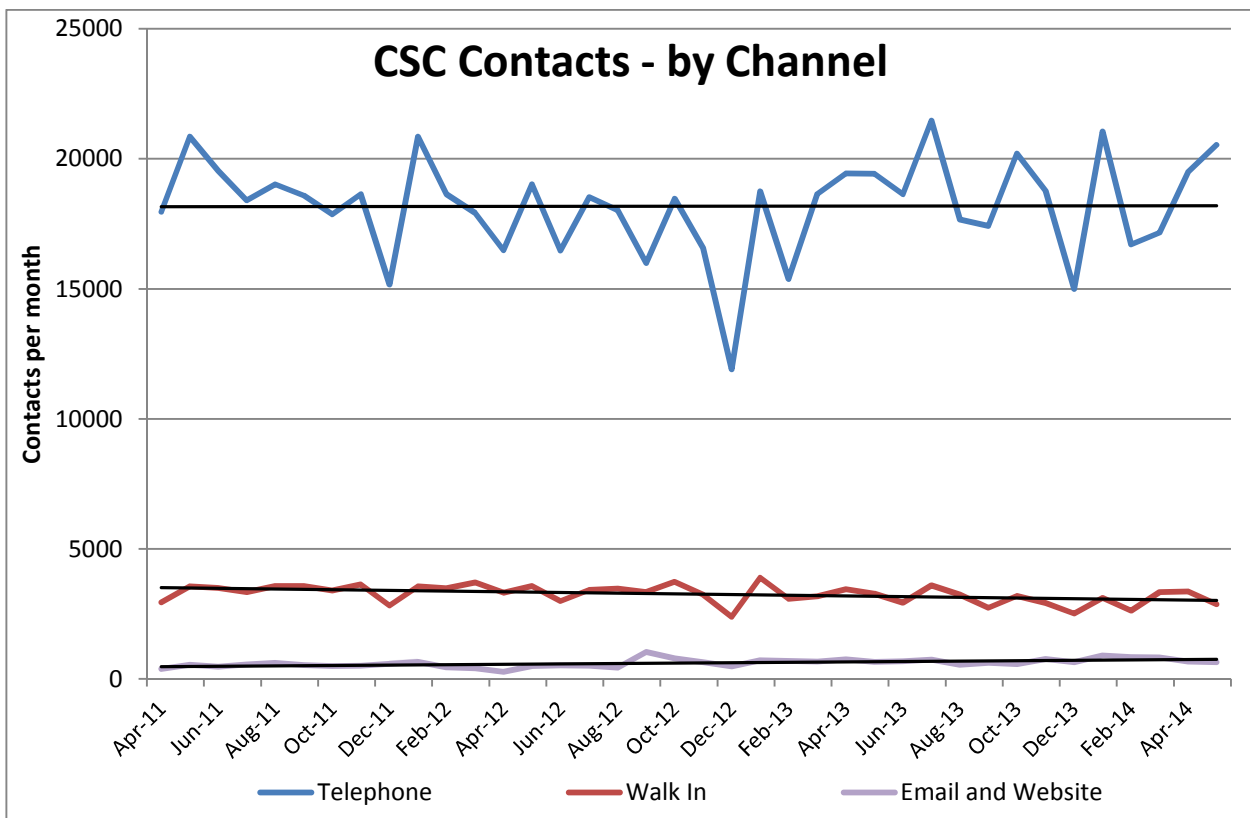


Figure 1 - customer demand has remained steady over the past 3 years

File name:	2014July208-Item4AppxA.docx		
Author:	Greg Arends	Version:	July 2014

Analysis

As can be seen, demand on all three channels has remained quite flat over the course of three years, although there is month-to-month variance (December can quite easily be spotted as a low demand period every year on the telephony channel).

- On average telephone demand has hardly changed over three years.
- There is some evidence for a very slow decrease in walk in demand – halving every 11 years.
- Although difficult to see at this scale, email and website use is doubling every 5 years. Email and Website contact remains a small fraction of demand at the moment – just 3.9% of CSC contacts in Q4 2013/14. Demand is doubling every 5 years, although difficult to see at this scale.
- If present trends continue use of electronic channels by customers will not overtake walk in until 2026.

Conclusion

Change in customer demand overall or even between channels is very slow; “channel shift” is not happening by itself.

Telephone channel

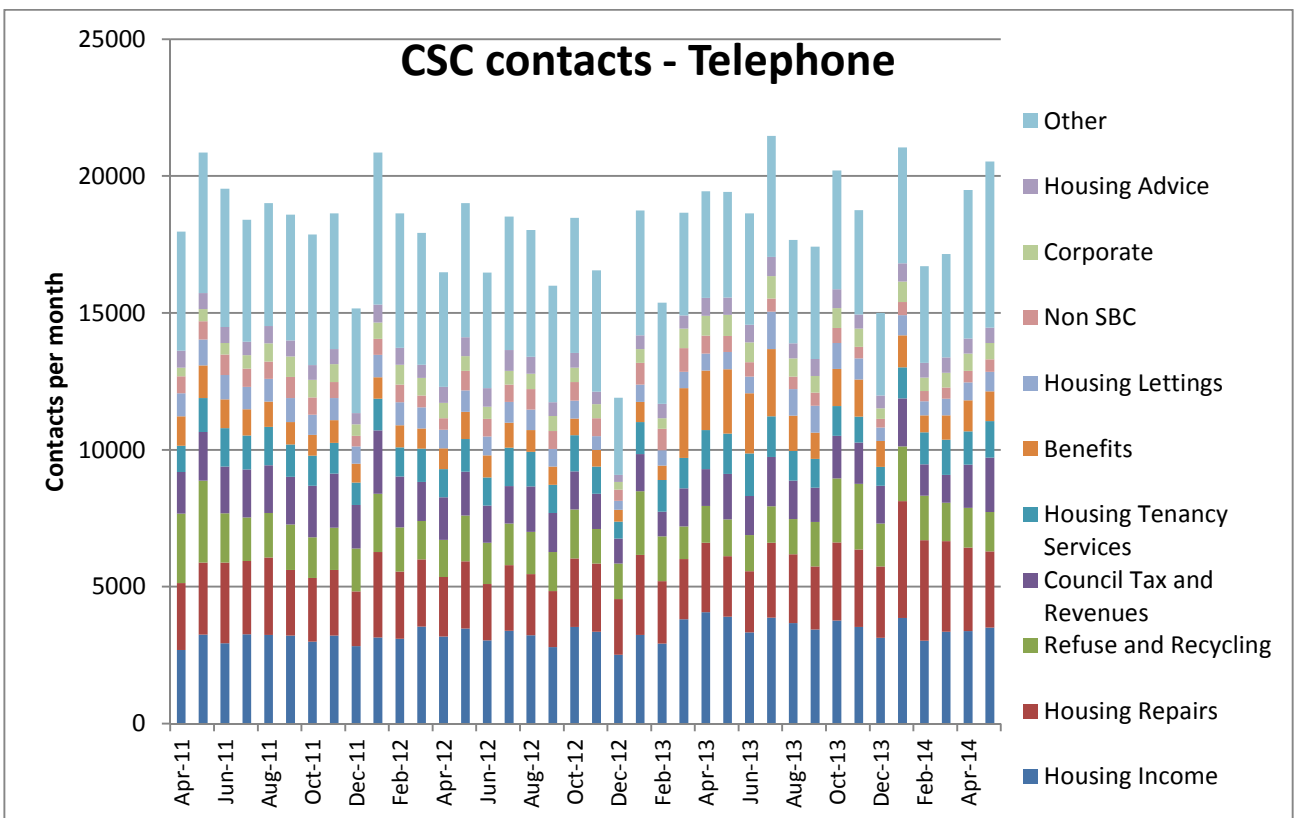


Figure 2 - customer contacts by telephone

Requested Service	Number of Contacts
Housing Income Maximisation - Rent Bal/Payment Enquiry	26874
Repairs - Works Order Raised (BMO)	15092
Repairs - Information Request	7419
Housing Income Maximisation - Call For Named Person	7201
Council Tax - Account Enquiry - payment taken	6670
Housing Income Maximisation - Call For Income Officer	6281
RW - Missed Collections	5770
Replacement Recycling Containers	5760
Housing Tenancy Services - Call For Named Person	5659
Housing Advice	5127
Top 10 services equate to 91'853 contacts = 41% of all telephone demand	

Analysis

- Overall customer demand using the telephone channel shows little sign of change over the three year period.
- Most demand is for Housing Income – although this includes people contacting because they are in financial difficulty, the vast majority of these contacts are to do with paying rent and/or checking rent balance over the phone (NB this does not include use of the automated telephone payments system which is recorded separately).
- The number of Housing Income contacts rose 15% between 2011/12 and 2013/14
- The second most used service is Housing Repairs; the number of Housing Repairs contacts rose 11% between 2011/12 and 2013/14
- The third most used service is Refuse and Recycling. Despite substantial changes to the service offered to customers and more services being routed to the CSC rather than the back office, the number of contracts dropped by 11% between 2011/12 and 2013/14.
- An apparent peak in the demand for the Benefits service from March-July 2013 is due to additional work (funded separately) carried out by Customer Services to handle Benefits contacts. Since August 2013 that work has been recorded separately.
- 18% of telephone contacts in 2013/14 included a payment and/or balance check – equal to 40'000 phone calls.

Conclusion

- Nearly a fifth of contacts are for payments and balance checks (e.g. housing rent, council tax), however a customer advisor appears to add little value to the transaction – an automated system could achieve the same result. There's likely to

be a good return on investment for moving these contacts away from being handled by customer advisors.

Walk in channel

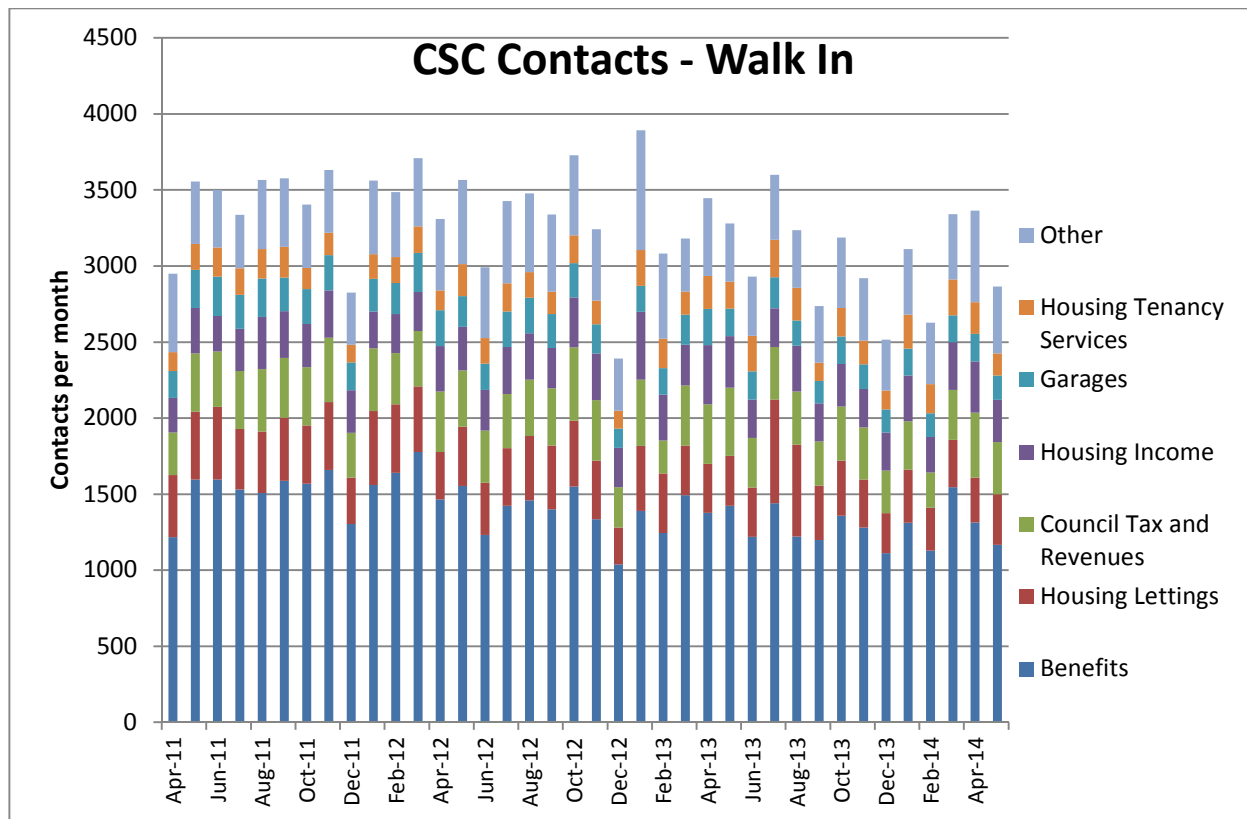


Figure 3 - customer walk in contacts

Requested Service	Number of Contacts
Benefits - Current Claim - benefits request for information	7819
Housing Lettings - Application Docs/Post Rec/Given	3361
Benefits - Current claim - change of circumstances	3194
Housing Income Maximisation - Rent Bal/Payment Enquiry	2098
Benefits - New Claim - application form and documents received	1878
Housing Tenancy Services - Docs/Post Rec/Given	1310
Council Tax - Information Form	813
Garage Services – Keys issued	763
Council Tax - Partnership enquiry	730
Housing Income Maximisation - Call For Named Person	663
Top 10 services equate to 22'629 contacts = 61% of all walk-in demand	

Analysis

- Customer demand for the walk in channel has gradually reduced over the period – at an average of 4.6% per year drop.
- Over 40% of all walk in demand is for the Benefits service.
- The number of walk in customers has reduced between 2011/12 and 2013/14 for across all three of the most used services: Benefits dropped 15.8%, Housing Lettings dropped 10.9%, Council Tax and Revenues dropped 9.6%.
- At the same time, demand for the Housing Tenancy service has risen 18.6%.

Conclusion

- Demand across the main services is dropping with some uniformity. This may therefore reflect an underlying change to customer behaviours and attitudes, rather than a change to the way we offer services (a change to one service would only affect that service's uptake). The increase in demand for Housing Tenancy is likely due a service specific change.

Email and website channel

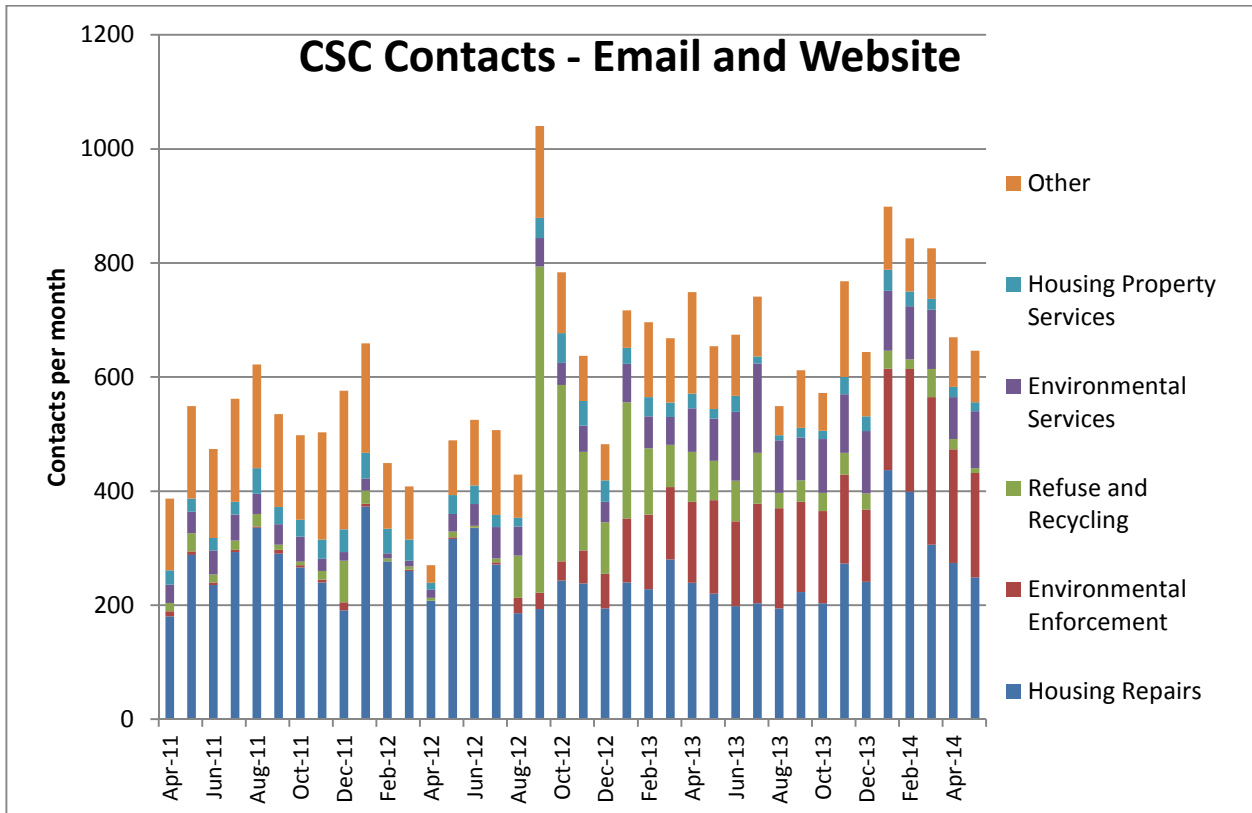
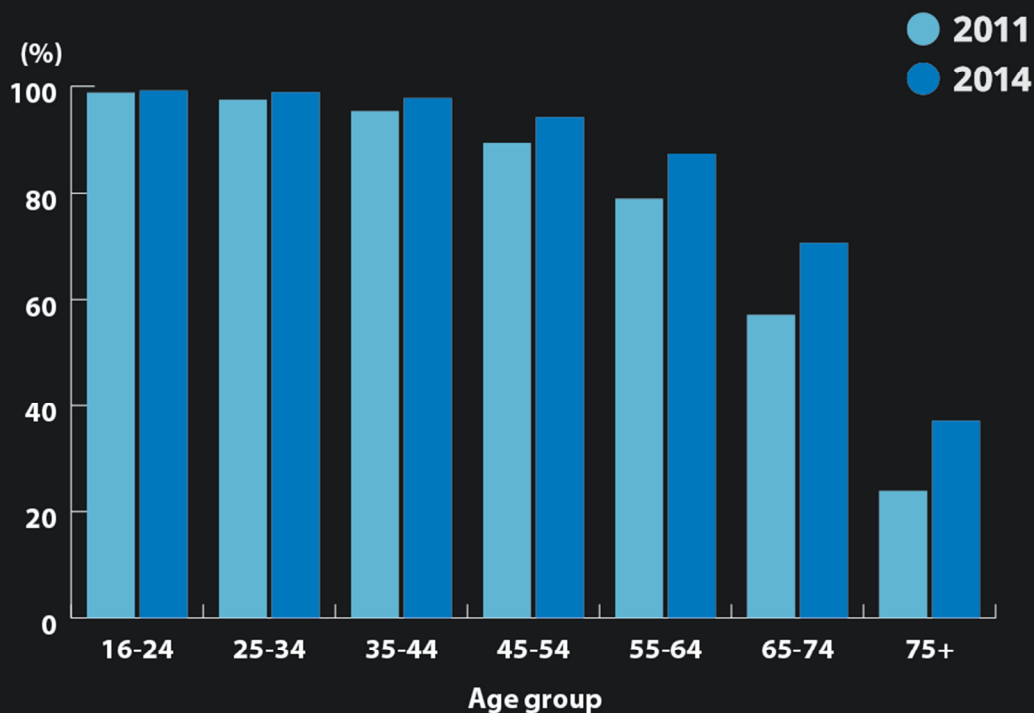


Figure 4 - customer online contact that is processed by customer services

Requested Service	Number of Contacts
Repairs - Works Order Raised (BMO)	1703
EN - Fly Tipping	1282
Repairs - Information Request	806
EN - Street Cleansing	642
EN - Abandoned Vehicles	289
EN - Dog Fouling	289
ES - Trees & Woodland Maintenance	282
Gas Enquiry	241
Repairs - Chase - Up (Outstanding Order)	173
RW - Missed Collections	153
Top 10 services equate to 5'860 contacts = 69% of all email and website demand	

The latest ONS analysis looks at Internet usage in the UK by age, gender and region. Internet use is linked to various socio-economic and demographic characteristics such as age, sex, disability, geographical location and weekly earnings. For instance, both the elderly and disabled are less likely to have used the Internet, and these differences are revealed in this analysis.

Access by age Q1. 2011 - 2014



The percentage of adults (aged 16 and over) who had never used the Internet was 13% in Q1 2014, down from 17% in Q1 2011. In comparison, the percentage of adults who had used the Internet was 87% (44.6 million adults) in Q1 2014, compared with 82% in Q1 2011.

Figure 5 - Office for National Statistics Q1 2014 infographic

Analysis

- Use of this channel showed a sudden increase from September 2012. This was in part due to the FixMyStreet online system launched for a variety waste and green space services. Part of the initial peak was also likely caused by the introduction of a new bin scheme which caused a short term increase in contacts.
- The services with most contacts are also the ones that have had most investment on their online systems: Housing Repairs, Environmental Enforcement, Refuse and Recycling and other Environmental Services.
- ONS figures show that only a small number of people aged 16-64 don't have internet access. Even for people aged over 65, the level of take up has increased by 10% between 2011 and 2014. Therefore the low take up of the council's online services is not in most part due to lack of an internet connection.
- [Customer Services only record contacts that come to them. For this channel that means they record no payments or balance checks etc. as those are carried out entirely automatically.]

Conclusion

There are considerable benefits to the council if customer contact comes through this channel:

1. All or part of transactions can be automated leading to reduced staff cost and reduced likelihood of error.
 2. If manual intervention is required then efficient scheduling of resource is considerably simplified – with a phone call it has to be answered there and then, but an electronic contact could happily sit for 15 minutes, and still be dealt with speedily.
 3. The onus is on the customer to provide correct written details, rather than the council for mis-understanding/ mis-recording details of a phone call.
- Investment in online services is required to bring them to a standard that customers would prefer to use them, rather than just phoning up.
 - Encouraging customers to go online instead of using other channels will probably require a corporate approach and a variety of actions, but will be necessary to see significant uptake.

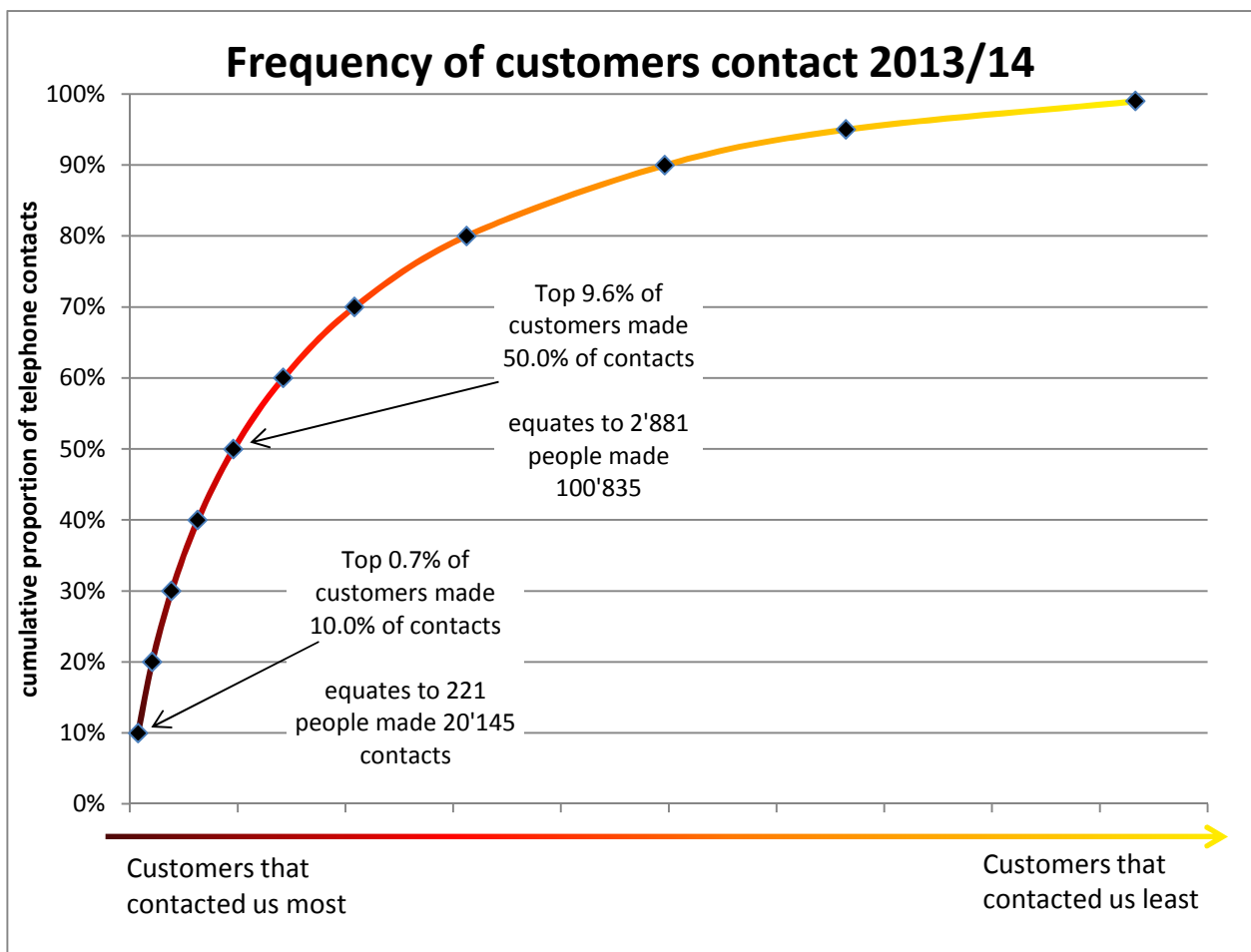
Frequency of customer contact

The non-anonymous telephone contacts for 2013/14 were analysed to identify how frequently customers call customer services.

Frequency of phone contact with Customer Services	Number of Customers	Proportion of all Customers	Number of Contacts	Proportion of all Contacts	Av. Contacts per year
Never*	34'526	53%	0	0%	0.0
Less than once a month	25'439	39%	76'650	38%	3.0
Once a month	2'889	4%	48'604	24%	16.8
Once a fortnight	1'313	2%	46'122	23%	35.1
Once a week or more	400	1%	30'325	15%	75.8
TOTAL	64'567		201'701		3.1

* Adult population figures from Census 2011 were used to derive the likely number of Stevenage people that didn't have named contact with Customer Services

An alternative representation can be found in the chart below:



Analysis

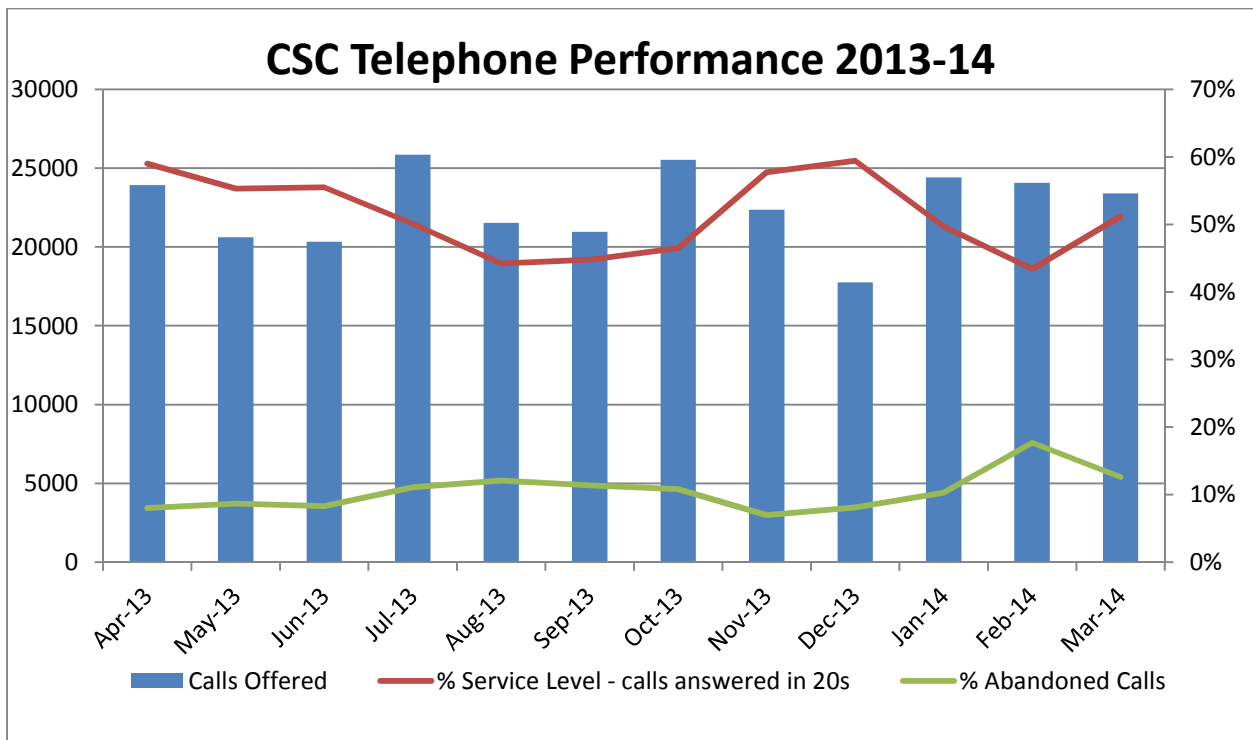
- The majority of Stevenage adults (53%) didn't appear to call customer services at all, but people who did contact us at all, contacted us a lot.
- 400 people accounted for 15% of telephone contact to Customer Services
- 1713 people accounted for 38% of telephone contact to Customer Services

TELEPHONE DATA

The table below shows the number of calls made to the customer services as recorded by the phone system. The phone system data is most useful in understanding performance of call answering.

Period	Calls Offered	Call Answered	Service Level - calls answered in 20s	Abandoned Calls
Apr-13	23924	21996	59%	8.0%
May-13	20613	18616	55.3%	8.7%
Jun-13	20337	18372	55.5%	8.3%
Jul-13	25843	22626	50.1%	11.1%
Aug-13	21534	18444	44.2%	12.1%
Sep-13	20963	18165	44.8%	11.4%
Oct-13	25535	22258	46.5%	10.8%
Nov-13	22353	20474	57.7%	7.0%
Dec-13	17758	16024	59.4%	8.1%
Jan-14	24408	21398	49.7%	10.3%
Feb-14	24062	19508	43.4%	17.7%
Mar-14	23402	20167	51.2%	12.6%
2013/14 TOTAL	270732	238048	51.2%	10.6%

As can be seen in the chart below, service level is typically high when abandonment is low a vice-versa. There is also not a clear link between demand and performance – so resourcing also plays a part.



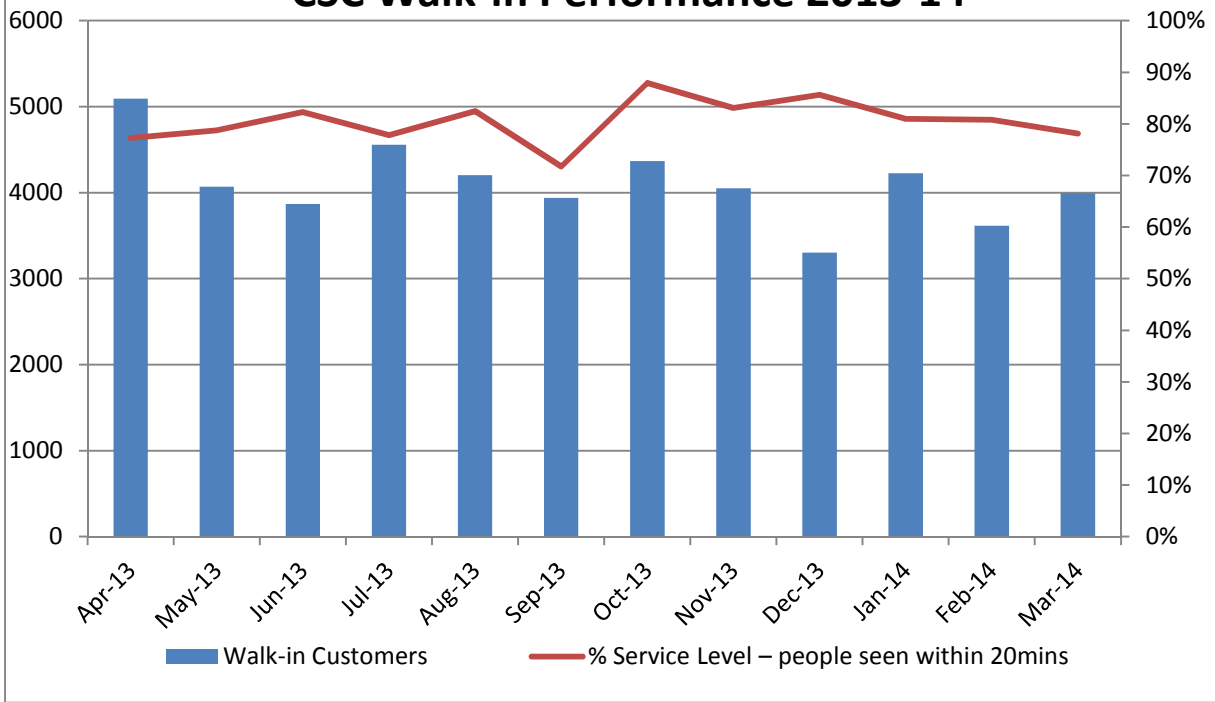
WALK-IN DATA

This data is primarily used to identify how many customers we saw within 20 minutes of waiting, often referred to as “service level”. This is also a Balanced Scorecard measure – CSC5. Currently customers are asked to take a ticket and wait to be seen; an on-demand service.

Period	Walk-in Customers	Service Level – people seen within 20mins
Apr-13	5092	77.26%
May-13	4071	78.75%
Jun-13	3869	82.27%
Jul-13	4559	77.80%
Aug-13	4204	82.47%
Sep-13	3938	71.71%
Oct-13	4366	87.94%
Nov-13	4050	83.11%
Dec-13	3301	85.61%
Jan-14	4225	80.99%
Feb-14	3616	80.81%
Mar-14	3996	78.15%
2013/14 TOTAL	49287	80.47%

The chart illustrates how service level in 2013/14 varied only weakly with demand – staff resourcing is also important in determining final performance.

CSC Walk-in Performance 2013-14



REAL CUSTOMERS

These are a small collection of our customers that frequently contact us, and what they talk to us about.

Telephony customers

Customer number one: 481 contacts in 2013/14

A high service user due to complex behavioural and medical needs. This customer is a housing tenant, rents a garage, and receives HB and Council tax support. Many contacts relate to ASB issues (both as a victim and perpetrator) which are unlikely to be resolvable for this particular customer. The housing team work closely with this vulnerable customer who refuses support from all other agencies.

Customer number two: 172 contacts in 2013/14

This customer is a Housing tenant and rents a garage from SBC. The customer calls to make an account enquiry on both her rent accounts and her Council Tax account, she will then make a payment on all three accounts (usually once per week). There are occasions where she also reports a housing repair through the CSC. There are no vulnerability concerns for this customer.

Walk-in customers

Customer number three: 88 contacts in 2013/14

This customer uses our walk-in centre weekly to submit wage slips, check balances and make a payment. The customer is on a low wage and has varying hours which means her benefit entitlement can change throughout the year. The customer prefers to submit weekly wage slips to the Benefits Service to ensure that there isn't any over payments, something which has happened in the past.

Customer number four: 80 contacts in 2013/14

This customer is a vulnerable tenant with care needs and is unable to use services independently. The CSC team assist the customer each week to pay money into the ATM machine and they provide the customer with balances on all accounts with the Council.