FourNet®

Saving Citizens 100,000 Hours of Potential ‘On Hold’ Time Per Year

Newcastle City Council Case Study



Newcastle City Council

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Average Wait Times Reduced From

857 → 183

Seconds

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£950k



Annual Cost FTE Avoidance

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84%



More Calls Answered Per Paid Hour

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‘Make Living Easier’

At the heart of this project is Newcastle City Council’s strategy to ‘Make living easier’ for their tenants. This doesn’t just mean improving their services around housing but giving tenants easy access to services that support other areas of their lives.Fundamental to achieving their goals is ‘IT that Enables an Excellent Customer Experience’ and ‘Making it Easier for Customers to Access the Services They Need’.

Newcastle City Council were considering rolling out a new Call Back solution to tackle their contact centre demand challenges. Before moving forward with the Call Back solution FourNet delivered a free Customer Experience Data Diagnostic to make sure that the tool would help them achieve their desired goals of to reduce call volumes and answer more calls.

The data diagnostic highlighted that without optimisation of their existing operations to address how calls were handled a Call Back tool would actually increase pressure on staff by adding an extra channel to manage.

Additionally, we identified that without changes to internal processes and workforce scheduling, to answer the existing call volumes NCC would need an extra £1.1m investment into extra staff (31 FTE).

Following this, FourNet proposed a plan to tackle NCC’s challenges without onboarding new tech or any significant investment into new staff.

Previous Contact Centre Metrics

16.5
Thousand Calls Per Week

8
Weekly Absence Through Sickness

60
FTE Agents

54%
Call Abandonment

30
Skillsets / Services

46%
Work to Pay
(Impacted by 24/7 centre and nightshift productivity)

5200
Answering 5200 Calls Per Week

857
Seconds Wait Time

How We Did It

29%

Improvement in Work to Pay Ratio

79%

Reduction in Average Wait Times

48%

Reduction in Abandoned Calls

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How We Did It

Abandoned Calls Reduced From

54%

↓

28%

77%

Increase in Calls Answered

An additional

4000

Calls Per Week Answered

Newcastle City Council

"Absolutely, unreal improvement."

Robert Clark, Newcastle City Council

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1

Removing the ‘Spin’

The Data Diagnostic found that NCC was handling between 11 and 20 thousand calls per week, and call volumes were volatile and unpredictable. Adding to this challenge was a high level of ‘spin’ from tenants abandoning calls and then redialing, which made it hard to get a clear picture of call volumes.
This high rate of “spin” from callers repeatedly attempting to reach NCC exacerbated the challenge, contributing to extended wait times and obscuring the true extent of contact centre demand, hindering efforts to accurately assess and manage call volumes.

2

Optimising Call routing & improving average speed of answer

Secondly the focus was on reducing the wait times for tenants and improving the average speed of answer. We found that callers had to wait 720 seconds to have their call answered by switchboard operators who would attempt to resolve their queries without rerouting calls. However, 80% of calls were not resolved and were then rerouted to the appropriate team, which meant that callers then had to queue again for an average of 840 seconds.

The solution was to have a dedicated switchboard team that would answer calls without trying to resolve them but transfer them directly to the appropriate team who can handle the queries. Switchboard staff were then able to answer calls in 30 to 50 seconds. This change reduced overall wait times from 857 seconds to 557 seconds and meant that tenants didn’t have to queue twice; additionally reducing strain on agents as they are only handling calls that they are trained for.

3

Closing the Gap in Workforce Management

At the start of this project, NCC had to pull reports from five separate systems to see the activities of each agent on any given day. The lack of transparency on how many hours agents should be available and ready to handle interactions made workforce planning difficult.

To tackle this challenge, FourNet created a report that automated the collection of each report, creating a centralised view of all workforce management data. This not only freed up the time spent by staff manually collating data but also gave NCC a clear picture of the number of agent hours they had available to handle calls without interruption.

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What’s Next for Newcastle City Council?

At FourNet, we aim to ensure that each customer is fully equipped to harness the benefits of new technologies effectively.

When NCC came to us looking to integrate a new Call Back solution, we didn’t just dive straight in. Instead, we started with a comprehensive Customer Experience Data Diagnostic. This crucial analysis quickly showed that NCC’s existing operations weren’t set up to fully leverage the new technology. Recognising this, we prioritised optimising their workforce management to efficiently meet demand.

Thanks to the transformative changes implemented, NCC isn’t just prepared, they’re now robust and ready to handle increased demand with their current team whilst improving citizen experiences. This not only sets the stage for introducing advanced technological solutions but also ensures NCC can explore new avenues for automation, streamline customer interactions, and further boost cost efficiency.



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