

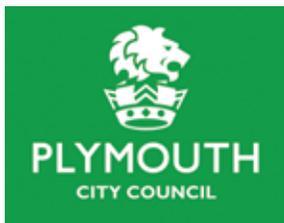


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David Saunders, Head of customer service, Plymouth City Council

power to you





As home to around a quarter of a million people, Plymouth is one of the UK's top twenty cities by population. Plymouth City Council is responsible for providing a broad range of services to these people – and answering their calls on any subject from abandoned vehicles to zebra crossings.

To handle these inbound calls, the Council uses a contact centre staffed by 70 agents. At present, this takes around 50,000 calls a month. "We estimate that the contact centre handles around 30% of the council's total calls – we want to raise this number significantly," says David Saunders, Head of customer service at Plymouth City Council.

The Council found that its existing system was not up to the job of dealing with the predicted growth in call numbers and was unreliable – creating a risk that the public would be unable to contact important departments such as social services workers, and that important calls could be lost. Reports could not be generated for 48 hours, agents had complicated log-in procedures which often meant they didn't log in to all their skillsets, and the system was difficult to administer.

Following a competitive procurement exercise, the Council chose a system from Vodafone based on Avaya Communications Manager, with a ComputerTel call recording solution. The system provides a single sign-on for agents and real-time reporting for supervisors.

"Vodafone had the closest match to our exacting requirements, and came closest to the budget restrictions we're faced with," says David. "We also paid particular attention to Vodafone's existing contracts and case studies."

The call recording system ensures compliance with the PCI DSS regulations for handling credit card data by automatically stopping recording when the payment page is accessed. This makes administration easier for the council, because it does not need to store audio recordings in a PCI-compliant manner.

Improved productivity

Productivity has improved with the new system and agent satisfaction has increased due to the user-friendly working environment. "We're going through a major restructure and we're using the data from the new telephony system to match resource to demand," says David. "We have full visibility, so we can make informed decisions about when and where we need staff, for example to change start times and enable flexible, part-time working."



“We’ve now got a much better management information framework that enables us to analyse call trends and undertake forecasting, so we can ensure we have the right resource in the right place, and that urgent calls are answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week,” says David. “Previously, we didn’t have the intelligence to look at resourcing on an hour by hour basis, so we could have agents sitting there not being utilised fully. We can also do skills-based routing and put overflows in place so that all the operators can take the right kind of calls based on their training.”

The Council is undertaking a property rationalisation programme and the new system is helping, as David explains: “We needed a telephony solution that’s free from constraints, and with the Vodafone system we can move somewhere else if needed – we expect to move as we increase call volumes.” For the future, the flexibility of the Vodafone solution will also allow the council to provide call centre capabilities to local partners under a shared services model.

“The working relationship with Vodafone has been very good, they have been flexible throughout the project and hit our timelines,” says David. “The system has been completely reliable – so far, uptime has been 100% and no calls have been lost.”

Significant benefits

- Higher productivity achieved because of better resource management
- Improved agent utilisation due to real-time reporting and skills-based routing
- Simpler compliance with PCI regulations, with automated suspension of audio recordings
- Increased agent satisfaction from user-friendly working environment
- No lost calls due to 100% uptime

