

Doncaster Council

Customer Experience Strategy

2023-2026

Foreword

Welcome to Doncaster Council's Customer Experience Strategy, which sets out our future aspirations to improve the customer experience of the people we serve. We deliver a high volume of an extremely diverse range of services to a population of 312,800 in the UK's largest geographic area authority of 226 square miles.

Through previous strategies, the Council has already invested in modern customer interactions and service delivery to meet the changing needs and expectations of Doncaster residents and businesses. This has been made possible by a more customer-focused workforce, the integration of our customer services 'front-desk', embracing digital technology and by improving processes to deliver more services online and at a local level.

Over the last few years, the Council has faced increased demand as well as delivering extra support throughout the pandemic such as business support grants and this has continued with schemes such as the Household Support Fund and the Council Tax Energy Rebate due to the rise in energy and food costs. It has and continues to achieve this through its usual channels with the same resource and we know this has affected customer experience.

The Council also recognises that there are still areas that require improvement and it wishes to improve as much as possible within the budget and resources available. It also wishes to take advantage of new technology and modernise further to improve service delivery and efficiency whilst taking care to maintain a level of traditional interaction where it is required and cater for those residents who speak a different language or have different needs to allow them to interact with us.

This strategy includes our vision for our future customer experience, the current situation, feedback we receive from Doncaster residents, known areas for improvement and the resulting action plan, which the council feels, is necessary to achieve the required improvement and includes:

- Increasing the ability for customers and businesses to access the services and information they need online, anytime;
- Streamlining our many contact channels promoted so there are clearer pathways to access support;
- Improving our performance when delivering services;
- Improving our communication during and after service delivery;
- Reducing the need to contact different services;
- Embedding a Localities Working model to maximise and connect local support;
- Introducing new ways of providing information more conveniently; and
- Introducing new behind the scenes technology to ensure greater speed and efficiency.



Ros Jones

Mayor Ros Jones



Damian Allen

Damian Allen, Chief Executive



Section 1: Introduction and Vision

“To always provide the best possible customer experience to all the people we serve no matter how and where we are contacted”

The Council and Team Doncaster partners have been in response mode for the last 2 years. Grappling with the challenges of Brexit, recovering from the devastating impact of flooding in 2019, the Covid-19 pandemic and now, the cost of living crisis. The world has changed as a result and the global pandemic has changed the way people live their lives and how the Council needs to operate.

During this time, the Council has seen Doncaster people move dramatically towards online channels. The adoption of digital channels has significantly accelerated and many of these changes will be here to stay as we all learn to live with the pandemic.

We must continue to meet the changing needs of our customers and we know there are still ways that we can improve across all of our services.

Doncaster Council’s last Customer Service Strategy ‘Customers are our business and define our success’ was agreed in 2016. It included the following aims, which the Council has strived to achieve where possible:

- A high percentage of Doncaster’s residents will know about and access appropriate Council services and information 24/7 online via one fully transactional Council

website and apps where appropriate via smartphone, tablet, computer or smart TV.

- Fewer residents will use traditional channels such as visiting a reception or phoning us. However, when they do, they will receive a high quality, value for money, personalised and proactive service, with the same technology so there is a single customer approach and single consistent data and records held, no matter what method is used to contact us.
- Our customers will only need to tell us something once and we will know more about what our customers need using the intelligence they have already provided to us.
- We will only send or request letters or paper documents where necessary and phase out other channels that are not as effective and value for money.
- All Council staff will operate digitally using modern technology with efficient automated and streamlined business processes and information at their fingertips.

- All Councillors will have technology to enable them to deliver excellent customer service when approached with the ability to request services, check progress and be aware of what has been reported and resolved in their ward.
- Doncaster Council will present itself as one joined up Council when offering services wherever possible and always aim to deliver what and when we promise.

We have not fully succeeded in delivering all of those aspirations to the extent we hoped for, however the following have been achieved:

- We have continued to develop our digital channels and promote them.
- The use of our digital channels now exceeds the more traditional channels such as reception, post and phone.
- We have maintained traditional access channels for those that do not wish or are not able to use digital channels but also when they are more appropriate.
- We have used the information you have provided with your consent to deliver support to you during the pandemic and the present economic crisis.

- We have reduced paper forms and letters where appropriate and when we know you can and wish to interact digitally.
- We have once again significantly modernised the way our staff work to improve efficiency and service delivery.

However, we know we still have improvements to make and as technology evolves, there are continually more possibilities to help us to do this.

Therefore, this Customer Experience Strategy looks at the current situation, what your feedback is telling us, known issues that need resolving and a resulting action plan to deliver through to 2026.

Vision

The vision for this strategy to convey the aspiration of the Council and knowing we have areas for improvement is simply

‘To always provide the best possible customer experience to all the people we serve no matter how and where we are contacted’.

Section 2: The Current Situation - Digital



The Digital World that we live in

With regard to the Council's main front door that includes all high volume services, digital interaction has now overtaken the more traditional channels used.

The split is now:
55% digital;
30% phone; and
15% one-stop-shop.

It has been said that globally we covered a decade in days in the adoption of digital channels due to the pandemic. In many cases, that shift to digital has continued due to it's ease and speed and low contact even in a post-pandemic environment. We need to meet this customer expectation whilst also maintaining traditional channels for those who require or prefer them.

Section 2: The Current Situation - Digital



Chat and 'Ask Alexa'

You can now chat with us online using our dedicated chat function, we receive approximately 5,000 chats a year. You can 'Ask Alexa' when your bin collection day is, 9,905 customers have asked Alexa since she was introduced.



Online Demand

We had 9 million page views on our website in 21/22 and 5.2 million from April to November 2022.



MyDoncaster

Most of our residents prefer to contact us online - **153,260 residents have signed up for a My Doncaster Account.**



55% of Council Services are now accessed online compared to 27% before the pandemic. Approximately 132 services are now available online, more could be included.



Multiple Contact Details

However, on our website we still advertise 328 different email addresses for customers to contact.



Accessibility

Our website has an accessibility score of 99%. We are committed to making our website accessible for all.

1,100,000

web forms submitted in the last 5 years



My Doncaster Online Account

Mr John Smith

My Profile

Mr John Smith

Male

Civic Offices

Waterdale
Doncaster
DN1 3BU

01302123456

jsmith@gmail.com

01/01/1995

AA000000A

Change your name

Update your gender

Update address

Update phone number

Update e-mail address

Update your date of birth

Update national insurance number

My Profile

Manage your personal details

Track My Request

Follow the progress of the request(s) that you have raised

My Council Tax

E-Billing, Change Of Address, Direct Debit and much more

My Business Rates

E-Billing, Changes In Circumstance, Direct Debit and much more

My Benefits

View your entitlements, Change Of Circumstances and much more

My Bookmarks

Change Password

Close My Account

Sign Out

153,260 people have signed up for a My Doncaster Account that allows them to access services that require identification, personalize with their own information and services such as viewing their council tax account as well as update their own details. That said, this needs reviewing, could be improved and it is not known how frequently residents use.

Section 2: The Current Situation – Digital

Council Tax and Business Rates – E-Billing

12,502 residents and businesses have signed up for council tax or business rates e-billing which is a much better value for money, however, many do not know this ability exists and it needs to be modernised so identification is proved via text rather than a letter when first setting up.

Mr John Smith

My Profile

Manage your personal details

Track My Request

Follow the progress of the request(s) that you have raised

My Council Tax

E-Billing, Change Of Address, Direct Debit and much more

My Business Rates

E-Billing, Changes In Circumstance, Direct Debit and much more

My Benefits

View your entitlements, Change Of Circumstances and much more

My Bookmarks

Change Password

Close My Account

Sign Out

My Council Tax Accounts

Here are a list of the accounts that are linked to your profile

Liable Address	Start	End	Balance	
1 My Street, Thorne, Doncaster, DN8 8ND <small>Acc # 100001231234</small>	21-May-2021	Open	£385.00	View Account
1 My Street, Thorne, Doncaster, DN8 8ND <small>Acc # 100001231234</small>	27-Feb-2021	31-May-2021	£0.00	View Account

You are registered for e-billing

We will send an e-mail to **Email Address details** whenever a new bill is generated

If you wish to change the address that we use, please update your e-mail address in [My Profile](#)

Add My Council Tax Account

To begin, we will need some details from your latest Council Tax bill

Account Number *

This is located on the left underneath your name and address. [Show me?](#)

Property Reference *

This is located on the right underneath the address that is referred as "Situation of property". [Show me?](#)

Section 3: The Current Situation - Telephone



In the past 5 years, Customer Services have taken over 1.1 million telephone calls, on a wide range and diverse number of council services. However Customer Services do not deal with all customer telephone contact for the Council which can result in customers being confused about who to contact. There has been 4.3 million calls in total across the Council.

In Demand



Not all customer facing teams use the Council's call management system to manage customer contact leading to an inconsistent customer experience across the Council.

Managing Demand



Artificial Intelligence is being used to answer calls for our Waste and Recycling Service. Binsley, our waste bot has answered 7312 calls and answered 13360 customers questions since he was developed in April 2021.

Innovation



The Council advertises 393 separate telephone numbers on its website making it confusing for our customers and leading to inconsistent levels of service.

Who do I call?

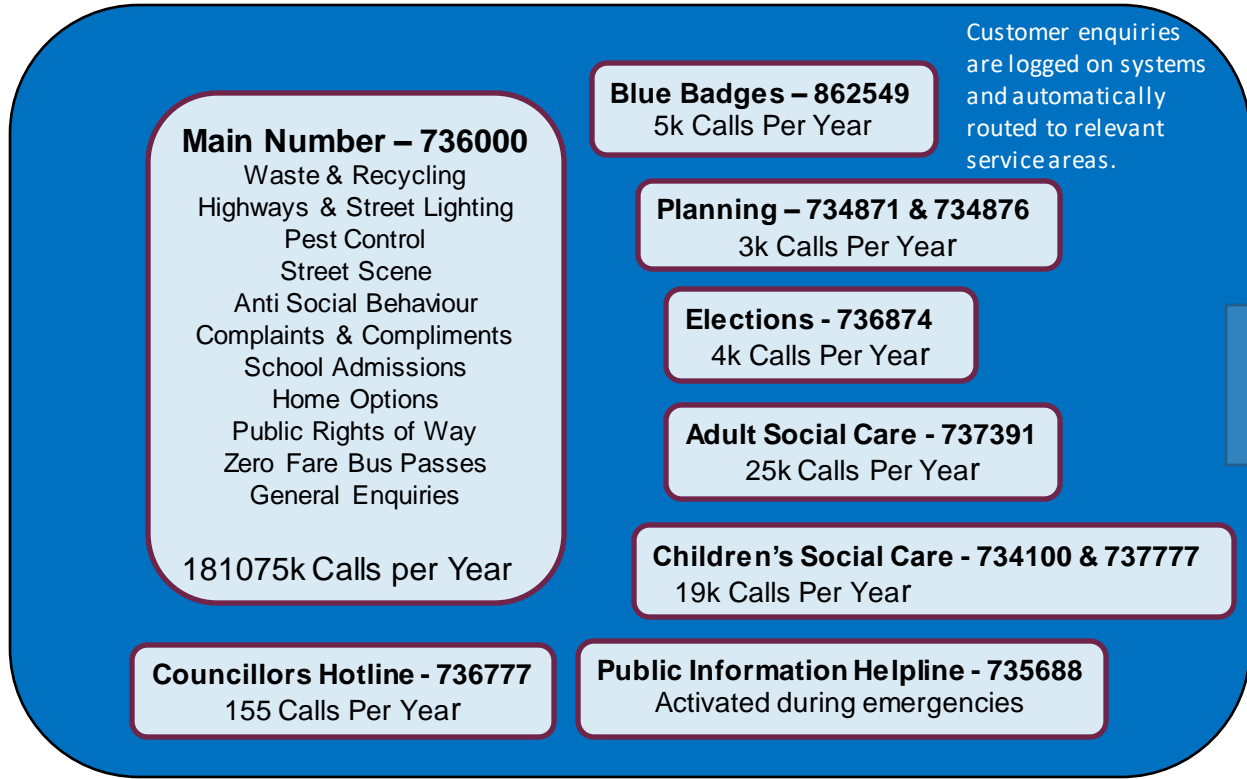


30% of customer contact to Customer Services is now by telephone compared to 39% before the pandemic.

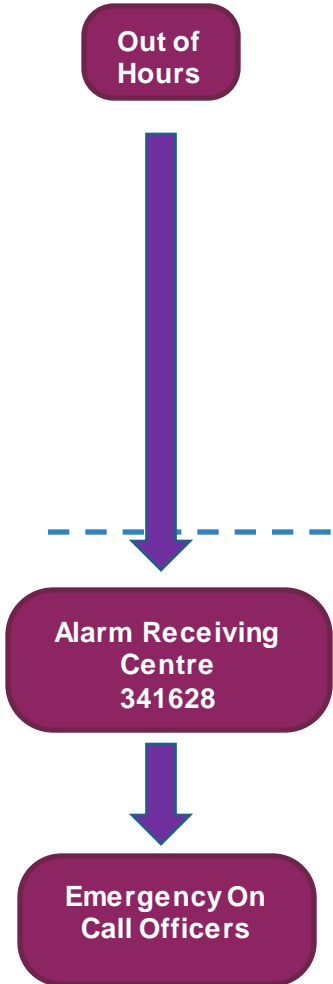
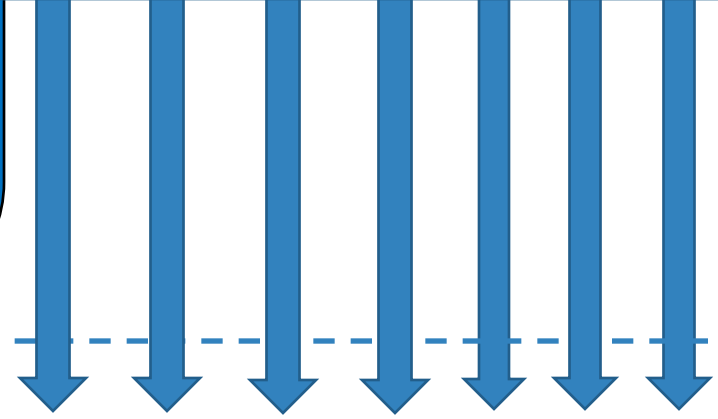
Customer Services aim to answer 90% of phone calls within 150 seconds. The average performance achieved in 21/22 was 83%. A rise in phone calls can be caused by many events throughout a year with no extra resource available. This can impact on the performance achieved and of course the customer experience. This can also occur across many different services across the Council meaning the ability to achieve the aspired performance is compromised.

Section 3: The Current Situation – Telephone – Customer Services Model

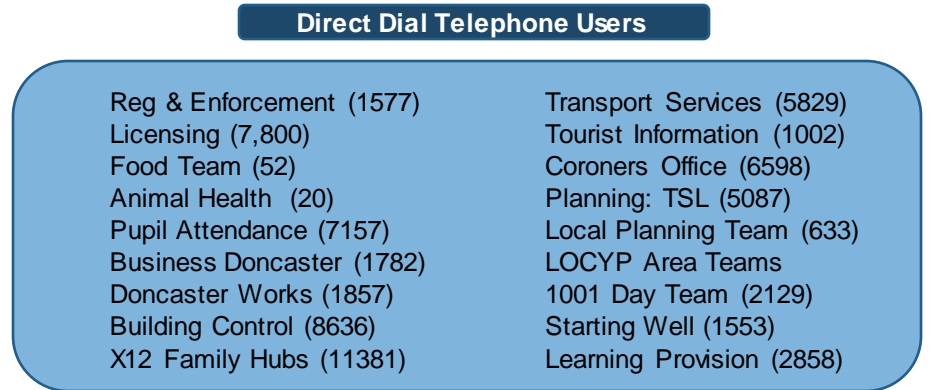
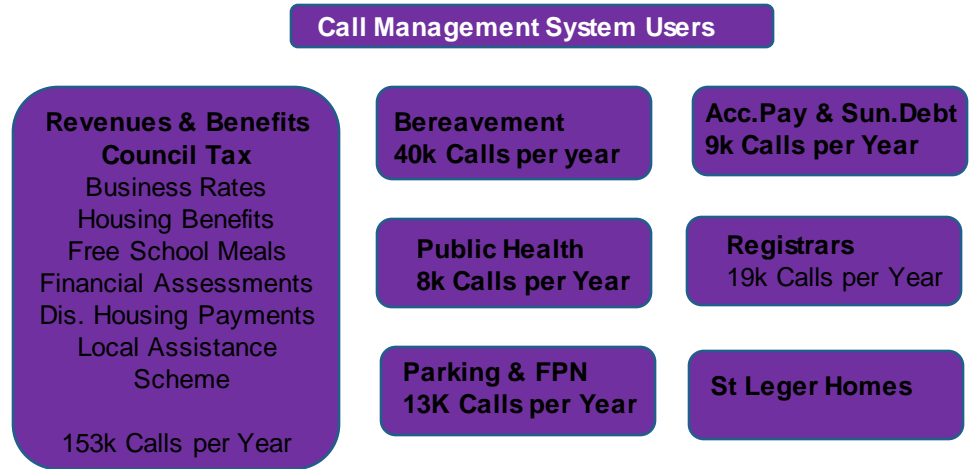
Customer Services



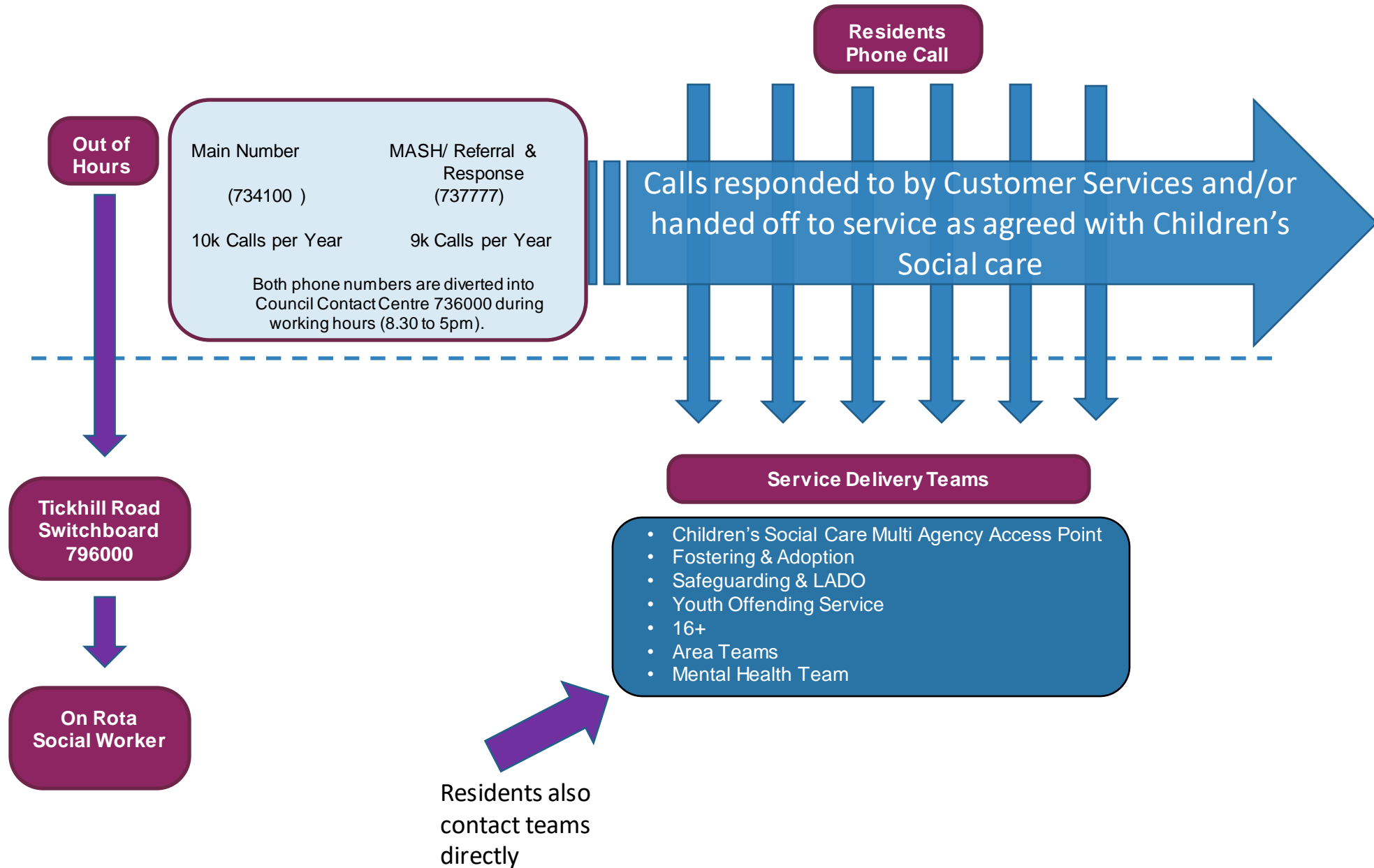
Calls not taken by Customer Services are transferred to the correct service area either manually or by automation. In 21/22 109,791 calls were transferred by automation alone.



Other Service Areas



Section 3: The Current Situation – Telephone – Children’s Social Care



Section 3: The Current Situation – Telephone – Adults, Health & Well Being

Customer Services

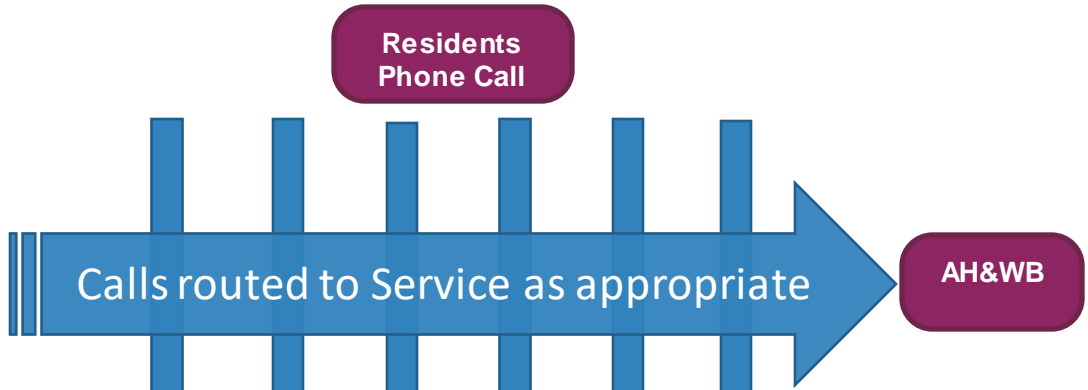
Out of Hours

Customer Service Contact Centre

Adult Social Care
Main Number
(737391)

↓

25k Calls per Year



Adult Social Care

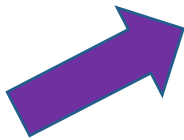
Tickhill Road
Switchboard
796000

On Rota Social
Worker

Service Delivery Teams

- Home Alarm Service
- Occupational Therapy
- Adaptations
- ISAT
- Safeguarding
- Mental Health Team
- Domestic Abuse Hub
- Future Options
- Positive Steps
- Wellbeing
- CALDT
- Locality Teams
- Sensory Team

Customers also
contact teams
directly



Section 3: The Current Situation – Telephone – Other Services

Corporate Resources

Revenues & Benefits
(153,000) including
Council Tax
Business Rates
Housing Benefits
Free School Meals
Financial Assessments
Discretionary Housing Payments
Local Assistance Scheme
Bereavement Services (40,000)
Registrars (19,000)
Accounts Payable &
Sundry Debtors (9,300)
Coroners Office (6598)
Transport Services (5829)

Adults Health & Well Being

Future Options (2922)
HEART (5658)
STEPS (8614)
Domestic Abuse Hub (1991)
Home Alarms (1143)
Bentley Positive Steps (18620)
Cantley Adult Hub (687)
Holmes Carr Adult Hub (189)
Future Options (2122)
Housing Adaptations (1666)
Public Health
(7,800)

Children, Young People & Families

Fostering & Adoption (1409)
MASH (1451)
1001 Day Team (2129)
Starting Well (1553)
Learning Provision (2858)
Libraries (1957)
Museum Reception (336)
Bentley Family Hub (1519)
Stainforth Family Hub (1324)
Rossington Family Hub (1372)
Armthorpe Family Hub (695)
Denaby Childrens Centre (1656)
Central Family Hub (2129)
Balby Family Hub (1735)
Adwick Family Hub (494)
Moorends Family Hub (457)

Economy & Environment

Regulation & Enforcement (1577)
Licensing (7,800)
Food Team (52)
Animal Health (20)
Pupil Attendance (7157)
Business Doncaster (1782)
Doncaster Works (1857)
Building Control (8636)
Tourist Information (1002)
Planning: TSL (5087)
Local Planning Team (633)
Parking & Fixed
Penalty Notices (13,100)

All these are examples of telephone services managed separately to Customer Services and outside the integrated front office model and these are the number of calls to these services in the Council financial year April 21 to March 2022. Some use technology to manage call queues but many do not. It is difficult to manage performance and ensure all these calls are responded to. However, that would be more achievable if part of the wider model.

Section 4: The Current Situation – Face-To-Face



Civic Building

The One Stop Shop has served 344,912 customers in the past 5 years. In 21/22, this was 15% of our customer contact compared to 33% before the pandemic. Customers visiting understandably reduced dramatically during the pandemic. The majority of customers visit to access services on our public computers, where Digital Assistants are available for help and support. In the last 5 years we have increased the number of public computers from 10 to 40 to meet demand.



Community Conversation Points

There are currently 50 venues across the borough, these include both pop up and static venues that provide drop in opportunities for people needing support. These are staffed by volunteers and Council officers for conversations about life, care and support, housing and the environment.



Locality Hubs

Doncaster is a 'place of places' with diverse communities, different strengths and equally variable needs. The locality approach is a way in which the council and partners can get closer to communities to understand these strengths and different needs. By hearing the voices of local people we are shaping our services, strategies and investment to better reflect these differences.



We have 25 Library points across the borough consisting of 21 Community Libraries and 4 staffed Libraries at Edlington, Mexborough, Thorne and Town Centre. Our new Library and Museum in Doncaster town centre, Danum Gallery, Library and Museum (GLAM) opened in May 2021 welcomes over 12,000 visitors through it's doors a month.



Tell us Once

Our Registrar service can inform other local and central government departments that someone has died on behalf of customers who are busy dealing with the emotional difficulties that come with bereavement, however we could do more to reduce the amount of contact needed when major life events occur.

Section 4: The Current Situation – Face-To-Face – Civic One-Stop-Shop

In 21/22 we served 50,228 customers

Opening Hours :
Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm

Services Provided by the Customer Service Team
Blue Badges, Licensing, HWRC Permits, Food Bank Vouchers, Elections, Alley Gate Keys/Enquiries, Radar Keys, School Admissions, Planning, Zero Fare Buss Passes, Registrars (Collection of Copy Certificates), Severn Trent & Yorkshire Water Searches, Public Highways Searches
Hate Crime Reporting Centre, Safety in Doncaster Centre, Breast Feeding Friendly Space.

Other Services Available in The One Stop Shop

Customer Services
Ambitions Team
Asylum Team
Citizens Advice Bureau
Council Tax & Business Rates
Families First Hub
Home Options
Housing Benefits
Local Land Searches
Registrars
SAPAT
St Leger Homes
Youth Hub
Overseas Pension Verifications

Private Interview Rooms and Informal Meeting Areas are available

Changing Places Facility
Public Toilets and Accessibility Toilet

Enquiry Booths
Services assist customers face to face.

Public Meetings are held in the Civic Building

Accessibility Toilets

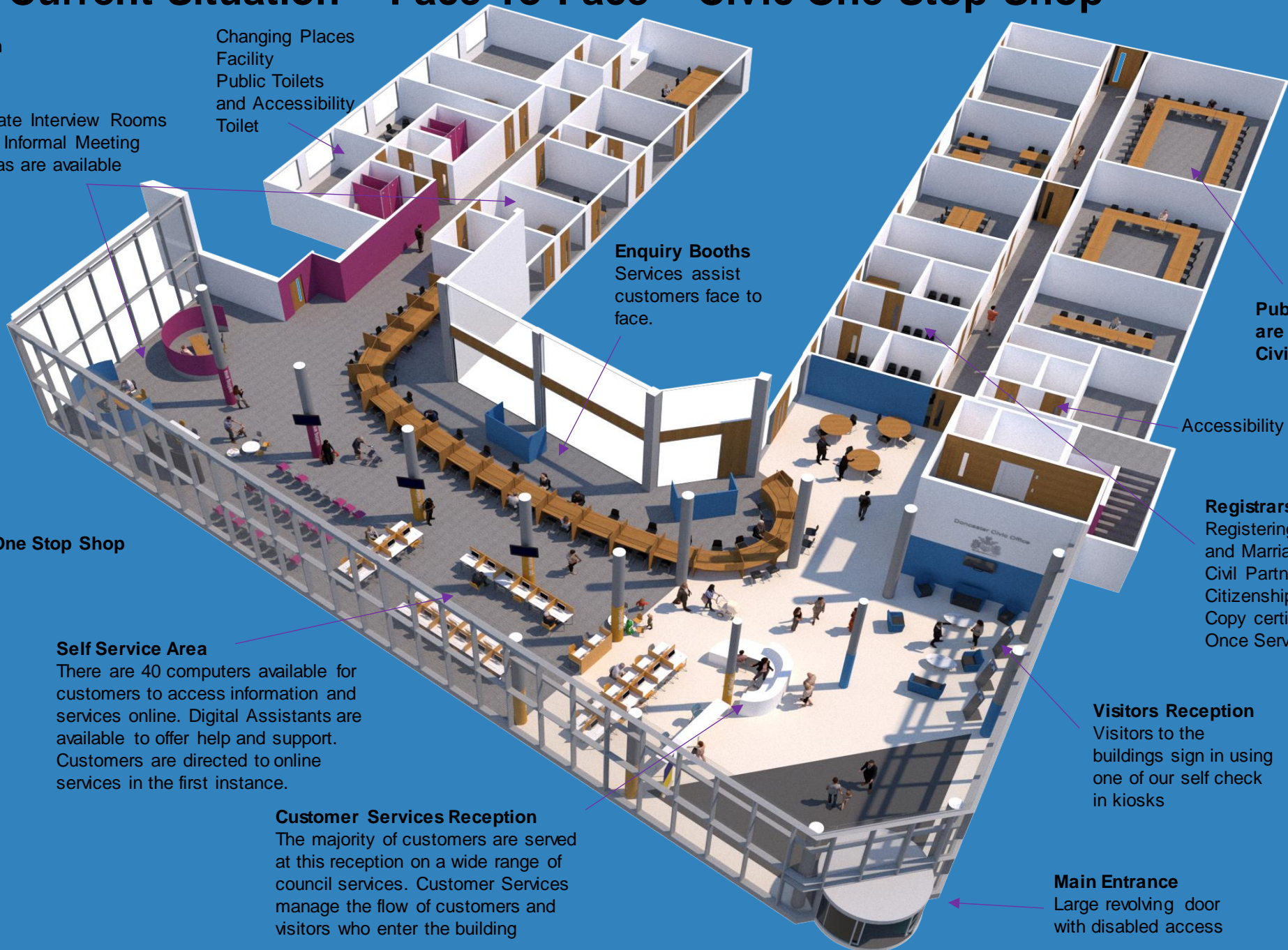
Registrars Service
Registering Births, Deaths and Marriages. Weddings, Civil Partnerships and Citizenship Ceremonies, Copy certificates, Tell Us Once Service

Visitors Reception
Visitors to the buildings sign in using one of our self check in kiosks

Main Entrance
Large revolving door with disabled access

Self Service Area
There are 40 computers available for customers to access information and services online. Digital Assistants are available to offer help and support. Customers are directed to online services in the first instance.

Customer Services Reception
The majority of customers are served at this reception on a wide range of council services. Customer Services manage the flow of customers and visitors who enter the building



Section 4: The Current Situation – Face-To-Face – Community Conversation Points

Prior to COVID-19 we had approx. 30 CLS sites. Now we have over 50!



Community Conversation Points

Sometimes called CLS Hubs, are opportunities for people to have conversations in places that are convenient to them, about their care and support, their housing, environment and community.

North

Static Sites

- Sprotbrough Library
- Bullcroft Memorial Hall
- All Saints Church, Woodlands
- Scawthorpe Library
- St Peter's Church, Askern
- Bentley Baptist Church
- Askern Library

Pop-Up Sites

- Morrisons York Road
- Asda Carcroft
- Askern Lake
- Lidl Bentley
- Tesco Scawsby
- Sainsburys Sprotbrough
- Campsall Village Hall

www.yourlifedoncaster.co.uk/community-conversation-points-central



Central

Static Sites

- Balby Community Library
- St John's Church, Balby
- The Linney Centre, Balby
- Cantley Methodist Church
- Lakeside Community Hub
- Intake Wellness Centre

Pop-Up Sites

- Morrisons, Balby
- The Dell Cafe, Hexthorpe (weather permitting)
- The Copper Pipe, Wheatley

www.yourlifedoncaster.co.uk/community-conversation-points-central



South

Static Sites

- Denaby Library
- The Ivanhoe Centre, Conisbrough
- Edlington Community Org
- Martinwells Centre, Edlington
- Kilham Lane Community Hall, Branton

Pop-Up Sites

- Conisbrough Town Centre
- Grays Court, Denaby
- Waites, Conisbrough
- Local Bar, Branton
- Weatherspoons, Mex
- The Ark Cafe, Rossington

www.yourlifedoncaster.co.uk/community-conversation-points-south



East

Static Sites

- Stainforth 4 All
- Hatfield Library
- Armthorpe Library
- Stainforth DN7 Foodbank
- Armthorpe Family Hub
- Edenthorpe Communal Hall

Pop-Up Sites

- Tesco, Edenthorpe
- Co-op, Kirk Sandall
- Edenthorpe Library
- Thorne Town Centre
- B&M/Aldi, Omega Business Park, Thorne

www.yourlifedoncaster.co.uk/community-conversation-points-east



Please note the above lists are not exhaustive and every Ward has its own comprehensive offer. Please scan the QR for each area's full details.

Section 4: The Current Situation – Face-to-Face - Family Hubs



There are 12 Family Hubs across Doncaster.

•**Central:** Central, Balby, Wheatley, Cantley, Bessacarr, Intake, Belle Vue

•**North:** Bentley, Adwick, Askern, Carcroft, Highfields, Scawsby, Sprotbrough

•**East:** Armthorpe, Stainforth, Moorends, Duncroft, Hatfield, Barnby Dun, Edenthorpe, Kirk Sandall, Thorne

•**South:** Conisbrough, Denaby, Rossington, Mexborough, Edlington, Finningley, Torne Valley

Section 4: The Current Situation – Locality Working

We want every person in Doncaster to live in a place they call home, with the people and things that they love, in communities where they look out for one another, doing things that matter to them

Bring together accessible community information that practically helps people, families, communities, staff and also underpins regenerative shift

Doncaster is a “place of places” with diverse communities, different strengths and equally variable needs

The locality approach is a way in which Doncaster Council and partners can get closer to communities to understand their strengths and different needs

Local Solutions for People, Places and Planet

Launch of Your Life Doncaster, bringing together key information about assets and support in each Locality

Voluntary sector partnerships in place and delivering preventative support in each Locality that improve health and wellbeing

Further improve the capability of services and collaborate to “see and solve” in communities

Completion of Appreciative Inquiry and wider engagement to find out what is most important to residents in each neighbourhood





Local Solutions Team- Your Family



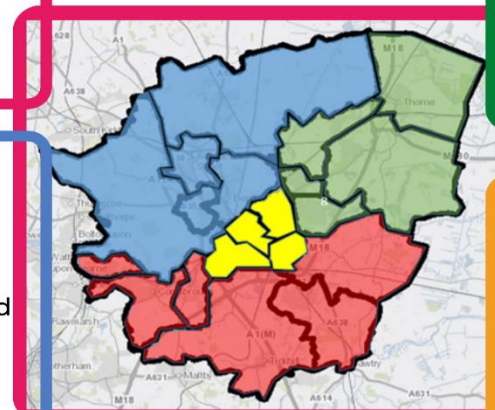
Where to find us

We recognise that every family is different, we provide support and information that is unique to families and residents, when everyday issues become difficult. This is part of our local help offer

North Hub
01302 736787
Woodlands Library
Windmill Balk Lane
Doncaster
DN6 7SB

East Hub
01302 736336
The Vermuyden
Centre
Field Side
Thorne
Doncaster
DN8 1DA

South Hub
01302 736409
Conisbrough
Community
Library, Old Road
Conisbrough
Doncaster
DN12 3ND



Central Hub
01302 735945
Civic Office
Waterdale
Doncaster
DN1 3BU

Simple Access guide

Supporting families/residents when everyday issues become difficult

Step 1

- Have a conversation with the individual

(Needs identified)

Step 2

- Share the Conversation Form with your family Triage Team
- Short intervention - 'See and Solve'
- Assessing intervention requirements

Step 3

If partnership intervention is required:

- Progress to Local Solutions Team
- Discuss the request and apply 'whole family' and place view
- Agree partnership actions and intentions to prevent escalation or applying appropriate escalation



Drop in , Call or email us

LocalSolutionNorth@gov.uk
LocalSolutionEast@gov.uk
LocalSolutionSouth@gov.uk
LocalSolutionCentral@gov.uk

Section 5: The Current Situation – Communication

As part of the increased shift to digital, we have changed the way that we communicate with our customers and provide information

A large proportion of our customers prefer to access information and council services digitally, using a variety of different channels – For example our website www.doncaster.gov.uk where 72% of services can be accessed online 24/7, 'you can Ask Alexa' when your bin collection day is and Binsley our waste bot provides information on our Waste & Recycling services. We also use social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to communicate general information to a wider audience. The use of the national Gov.uk Notify service has given us the ability to use SMS text messages to communicate more effectively with customers, in 21/22 we sent 917,564 text messages to customers.

We do of course still take care to provide communication by more traditional means for those that require it as well as assistance with how to use digital platforms either over the phone or in person.

The increase in digital channels has resulted in a reduction in the amount of post we send and receive as a Council, however we could reduce more:

70%

Fewer post items received

We received 374,438 items of post in 17/18 compared to 113,265 in 21/22 .

20%

Fewer post items sent

The council posted 1,515,765 items of post out in 17/18 compared to 1,210,016 in 21/22.



Section 6: Access for All

Our website has an accessibility score of 99%. We want as many people as possible to be able to use our website, you can:

- change colours, contrast levels and fonts;
- zoom in up to 300% without the text spilling off the screen;
- navigate most of the website using just a keyboard;
- navigate most of the website using speech recognition software;
- listen to most of the website using a screen reader;
- translate text into different languages; and
- Use Texthelp which provides a screenreader and translate service.



We have completed a full audit on our website to ensure our content is up to the WCAG 2.1 Accessibility Standards.

You can find our Accessibility Statement here <https://www.doncaster.gov.uk/accessibility>

The Civic Building One Stop Shop has disabled parking bays available around the building with an accessible entrance. We have a Changing Places facility and accessibility toilets. We have a range of meeting spaces to meet individual needs with hearing loops installed in some. Translation and BSL interpreters are available via telephone and face to face on request. We have 40 computers available for customers to self serve with Digital Assistants on hand to help, the computers have web cams built in to enable our deaf customers to access Sign Live.

If you call Customer Services on 01302 736000, you can request assistance if you have a disability.

Section 7: Digital Inclusion

The Council is working with the government and connectivity providers to increase digital coverage across Doncaster. There is currently 98.82% superfast broadband and 66.15% gigabit high speed broadband coverage across the borough with plans to achieve the government target of 85% (National Infrastructure Strategy, 2020) by 2025.

A survey and some analysis has just been completed across Doncaster to review the current state of digital inclusion across the borough to improve our understanding and more activity is planned.

Whilst Doncaster internet usage, which is just above the national position, has increased over recent years, there is still a significant percentage of the population who are not using the internet or do not have access.

There are a number of wards in Doncaster where the combination of deprivation and poor internet infrastructure puts those populations at particularly high-risk of digital exclusion.

There is currently a small range of digital established support offers across Doncaster, mostly delivered through short courses in the central library, community libraries, Age UK in the town centre or individual 1:1 through voluntary organisations on a needs basis.

There is a good foundation within Doncaster to spread the limited approach in place or to adapt and test to enable wider engagement and support.

This supports the increased use in digital channels we have seen when accessing Council services but also informs us that we must maintain traditional channels also for those that require them.

Using and maintaining intelligence will keep us informed about what channels to use.

What Residents Told Us (of those surveyed)

- 82% own a computer/laptop, 92% own an internet connected phone, 65% own a tablet device, 50% own a voice activated device – 96% use their devices to go online
- 93% connect with friends and family by making a call or texting, 70% can video call online
- 84% use online banking
- 57% shop online
- 76% plan and book holidays online
- 38% would be interested in undertaking any learning activities to improve their online skills

I use the internet using phone, tablet computer and Alexa . I don't think I need anything more

I am not interested in the internet I don't have anyone to support me

I use the internet using phone and computer. I would like support on safety and making the best use of my devices

I have an internet connected phone, my family & friends support me, I'm not sure I need support as I don't use it on my own

Section 8: What Our Customers Are Telling Us

We received 815 complaints in 21/22. 71% of complaints were responded to within our target of 10 working days and only 17 resulted in Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman investigations which is similar to other neighbouring Local Authorities.

We received 418 compliments in 21/22 across all Council services.

We take all complaints seriously and use them to inform service improvement where required. Examples include improvements in how we communicate with our customers, training for staff on how to investigate and respond to complaints, performance reporting to service areas.

We received a lot of compliments for council staff – the standard of work carried out, helpfulness, understanding and dedication

Some customers experienced difficulties when trying to contact certain departments

We received a number of complaints about lack of communication from the Council regarding their issue

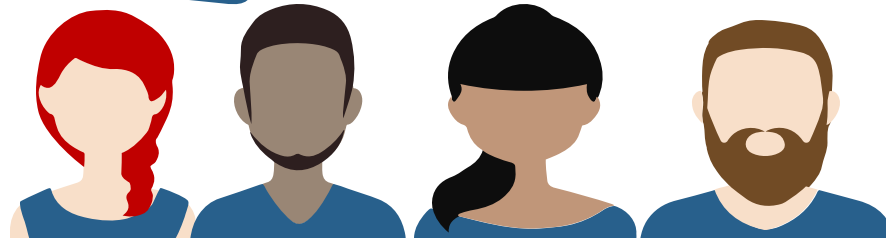
Customers contacted to say they were very appreciative of the work during the pandemic, the care and consideration that was shown to vulnerable residents.

"I can't get through on the phone."

"The service was excellent"

"Nobody gets back to me."

"Couldn't have been more helpful"



Section 9: Known Issues Impacting on Customer Experience

Many Doncaster residents contact the Council's Customer Services every day by phone or by visiting the one-stop-shop. This means Customer Services staff have a really good understanding of how Doncaster residents feel about their experience which is difficult to measure on an on-going basis.

Customer Services also lead Council strategy with regard to the whole Council quality of customer service and are constantly looking at the whole model to inform improvement, intelligence relating to customer service and service delivery performance.

Services are approached where there are known issues and requested to resolve but some issues are more fundamental and require a whole council approach. The present known issues that are not resolved are:

1. Our customers are constantly confused about all the different services, locations and who to contact.
2. We do not have a full picture of what the customer experience is across the whole Council and the quality of customer service and response times.

3. The biggest reason why our customers complain is the lack of communication. They request something and don't hear anything back from some services.

4. Some service areas are not achieving their timescales for service delivery making it difficult to set customers' expectations and for them to be able to track the progress of their requests on-line.

5. There are known phone answering problems in some services leaving customer calls not responded to.

6. Some teams do not pick up calls transferred from Customer Services at all or keep the customer waiting on hold for a long time.

7. There are many different phone numbers and email addresses published on the Council website. We do not know if these all get responded to.

8. Some services leave citizens waiting in a phone queue for too long due to resource issues.

9. Not all services use the Customer Relationship Management System so we do not have one record of customer contact across the Council.

10. Not all services are actively reducing the use of paper documents sent through the post, the slowest and highest cost method of delivery.

11. Not all services are using the website as their primary access channel or encouraging on-line access.

12. Our reception points across the borough do not operate with consistency or operate as a 'no wrong door'.

13. Technology could be used to further improve the customer experience and assist with resource and timescale issues such as the use of artificial intelligence bots and robotic process automation.

14. We do not promote Ask Alexa sufficiently to make people aware that it exists and we have not yet promoted Binsley as our automated advisor.

15. When significant life events occur such as moving house, there is no easy way to inform all the relevant services.

16. The number of access points we have means that some are duplicating and/or dealing with a low amount of enquiries meaning they are expensive to run in terms of staff and buildings.

Section 10: Improvement Action Plan

Actions	Why Implement	Benefits
<p>1. We will review our service delivery performance targets on a more regular basis, make them clearer to residents and make sure we are resourced to achieve them.</p>	<p>Our service delivery targets have not been reviewed recently. A shift in demand can impact on the resources required to meet the target. They are not published in one place on the Doncaster Council website or our performance against them and are not always known when a service is requested.</p>	<p>A more regular assessment of resource needs in line with service demand will enable more accurate expectations to be set. If residents are more informed around the timescales for delivery, this should reduce the need for repeat contact to chase.</p>
<p>2. We have too many phone numbers advertised on our website with differing performance when answering the calls. We will review, rationalise and seek to improve our performance.</p>	<p>Our residents receive a different experience depending on which part of the Council they contact. Differing levels of performance are also achieved. The Customer Services Contact Centre has a current performance target based on answering 90% of calls within 150 seconds. This cannot be achieved across the Council and some performance requires significant improvement. There are also peaks and troughs of telephone contact throughout the year that could be managed in a better way.</p>	<p>An improved experience for our residents when they contact us. A more efficient way of dealing with general phone contact leaving more complex phone contact to service specialists and freeing them up to achieve more service delivery and other required tasks.</p>
<p>3. We have a central one-stop-shop in Doncaster and many reception points delivering different services across the borough. We will review and make clearer the purpose of each and implement a no wrong door ethos.</p>	<p>There is currently no full picture of face-to-face customer access points across the Council and the services they deliver. Performance is also not known across these points. The Council's performance target is to not keep anyone waiting longer than 10 minutes. This is measured using technology in the Civic Office one-stop-shop but not measured across the borough. It is also unknown whether these points deal with other services or at least record any requests etc.</p>	<p>An improved experience for the residents who visit any of our customer contact points across the borough. An increased awareness of where these are and what they deliver and perhaps access to increased services. A more efficient face-to-face model with more services working together from the same location where possible meaning our residents do not get passed around as much.</p>



Section 10: Improvement Action Plan

Actions	Why Implement	Benefits
<p>4. We have too many email addresses for different services. We will review, rationalise where possible and improve performance.</p>	<p>Email is a quick and easy way for our residents to contact the Council, however it is difficult to monitor where these are received, when they are responded to and how long it takes the Council to respond. Emails can also often not include all the information required by the Council to progress a service or issue that a web form can ensure is included. We also have technology in Customer Services that can improve the performance management of emails. That said, if a resident has email, they also have access to the internet and can use the web form that would ensure their request gets to the right place quicker.</p>	<p>An improved experience for our residents when they contact us by email. Less email with missing information to inform the service required ensuring greater efficiency. Less email taking service delivery staff away from service delivery and other tasks.</p>
<p>5. We deliver many services on-line to provide 24/7 access as well as using more traditional channels where required but there are still more on-line services we could provide. We will review and make these available.</p>	<p>Many residents wish to access as many services as possible on-line due to their busy lives and this saves them having to contact us as well as providing the ability to do it seven days a week and outside opening hours. We are able to route on-line service delivery direct to the service much quicker and with all the information required. Most of our high volume less complex services are on-line but there are still more and technology developments are making it possible to deal with more complex services in this way too.</p>	<p>Increased ability for those residents who wish to and have the ability to access services on-line. Increased efficiency and the ability to route to the required service much quicker. Less work for service specialists so they can focus on service delivery, more complex queries and other required duties.</p>
<p>6. We recognise that we need to provide comprehensive support in person for some circumstances so we will open facilities to do this across different localities in the borough.</p>	<p>The Council has created a new Localities model to maximise and connect local support.</p>	<p>Increased support in communities across the borough.</p>

Section 10: Improvement Action Plan

Actions	Why Implement	Benefits
<p>7. We recognise that we need to improve our service delivery related communication to residents and will review how we communicate when your requests have been delivered or there is a delay.</p>	<p>A lack of communication by the Council is the biggest contributor to complaints. The experience they have when dealing with the private sector such as parcel deliveries at a time that suits them has improved significantly over the last couple of years and they rightly expect local authorities to modernise in a similar way. Not all services have the technology to acknowledge receipt of a request or when the service has been delivered and this could be improved.</p>	<p>Our residents will know their request has been received, and when a service will be delivered for more services. This should reduce repeat contact to chase and escalations to our Councillors.</p>
<p>8. The ability for you to tell us something once and to get all your relevant records updated is limited. We will review and seek to improve.</p>	<p>When major events occur such as when a person becomes deceased, we have in the past sought to make it easier for their family to report and to ensure all the relevant services are notified to put their affairs in order. We have done this by information sharing in the background or via our Registrars Service but this could improve and include more services. When residents change their address or move in or out of the borough, they still have to let different Council services know.</p>	<p>This would reduce the amount of contact our residents need to make with us when life events occur. They will have a significantly improved customer experience.</p>
<p>9. We will review our on-line My Doncaster account facility and seek to improve your experience.</p>	<p>Despite approximately 153,000 Doncaster residents signing up for a My Doncaster on-line account, many residents are not taking advantage of the benefits of doing so. In order to have an account, our residents need to verify their identity. Once they have done this, they can get access to more information, receive more information digitally and make it easier to access services. A review would also improve what is achievable using this secure account.</p>	<p>This could save more residents having to prove their identity for different services. More residents could access their own information held by the Council. More residents could receive digital documents such as their council tax bills instead of paper ones. More residents could receive proactive information from the Council.</p>

Section 10: Improvement Action Plan

Actions	Why Implement	Benefits
<p>10. We will review our remaining use of paper forms and letters and seek to rationalise further.</p>	<p>The Council still issues too many paper documents and forms and in some cases does not provide a digital alternative for those that would prefer it. Some services still request communication in writing for some aspects and this is very dated. Some services send out letters and documents to all despite the Council having technology to send high volume emails and texts where email addresses and mobile numbers are known.</p>	<p>Sending letters and documents by post takes longer than sending digitally and requires more effort. Both by residents and the Council. It is also much more expensive. Many residents who communicate with us on-line would receive all/most of their communication online unless there was a legal reason not to do so.</p>
<p>11. Our Customer Relationship Management Solution and associated technology used to manage customer contact across many services and route from the website and to service delivery teams needs updating. We will review how it meets our requirement and enhance or replace if required.</p>	<p>We have had this solution for many years now and our contract is coming to an end. Technology has also moved on and we should review what our requirements are and what is achievable. We should also learn from the significant improvements the private sector have put in place over the last couple of years.</p>	<p>This solution drives the whole process between the customer contact right through to service delivery for many services as well as holding records and service history and producing notifications, providing the ability to track progress etc. It also provides performance management against agreed service delivery targets and the required intelligence to take any corrective actions. Any improvement will improve the customer experience, the way services work and efficiency.</p>
<p>12. We recognise that the increased use of artificial intelligence and the introduction of robotic processing automation behind the scenes could speed up our response and service delivery. We will explore and implement where it is appropriate.</p>	<p>Responding to high volume general questions and completing high volume repetitive tasks can now be completed by technology in appropriate circumstances. The government, other local authorities and the private sector already use these methods and the Council does behind the scenes and more recently, publicly over the last year via our waste bot known as Binsley and other channels such as Ask Alexa. As service demand continually stretches resources and when staff are difficult to recruit, we should explore where to use this further.</p>	<p>Improved efficiency and performance 24/7. Technology is hardly ever ill, does not need a holiday and needs much less sleep.</p>

Section 11: Conclusion

Over the past two years, the council has seen Doncaster people move dramatically towards online channels. The adoption of digital channels has significantly accelerated and many of these changes will be here to stay. Therefore we must continue to meet the changing needs of our customers and we know there are still ways that we can improve across all of our services.

Doncaster Council's last Customer Service Strategy was agreed in 2016 and included aims such as a high percentage of council services available online 24/7, a reduction in traditional channels and paper documents, customers only need to tell us once and staff operating digitally. We have succeeded in delivering these aims to an extent but we know we still have improvements to make.

Our vision for this strategy is simply **'To always provide the best possible customer experience to all the people we serve no matter how and where we are contacted'**.

Many of our customers expect a digital experience, our challenge is to listen to our customers and seek to achieve this whilst also maintaining traditional channels for those who require or prefer them.

We recognise that we need to provide comprehensive face to face support for people in their communities. Doncaster Council and partners are taking a localities approach to get closer to communities to understand their strengths and different needs.

We currently do not have a full picture of what the customer experience is across the whole council and across all access points with regards to quality and response times.

Technology is continually improving and we need to further increase our use of artificial intelligence and robotic processing automation behind the scenes to improve service delivery. This will assist with capacity and performance improvement.

A lack of communication by the council is the largest contributor to complaints. Customers expect the same experience they have when dealing with the private sector such as parcel deliveries at a time that suits them. Customers are expecting local authorities to modernise in a similar way. Not all our services have the technology to acknowledge receipt of a request or tell customers when a service has been delivered, we need to improve how we communicate with our customers.

The delivery of this strategy will enable Doncaster Council to continue on our journey to improve, manage and monitor our customer experience not only across the borough but also across all access channels. So wherever and however our customers contact they receive the best possible customer experience.

