
Bath & North East Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

Customer Contact Strategy

Agenda

- Current ways customers contact the Council
- B&NES Fix My Street
- Customer Contact Strategy
 - what we know
 - digital first approach
 - discovery
 - key principles
- How can you support us?



How do residents contact the council?



Many channels of communication - website, email, social media (Twitter, Facebook etc.) telephone or in person.

The medium of choice is often related to the vulnerability of the customer themselves or the nature of the service in question and the level of complexity or sensitivity of the subject.



For more transactional activity (making a payment, booking, ordering something or reporting something) we encourage residents who can, to self-serve, so we can direct our resources to support those who most need our help.

Online contacts are increasing as we introduce more interactive forms (107 available) for those who wish to self-serve.



Over 2.5 million calls are taken by a variety of services including Virgin Care, Switchboard, Pensions, Council Connect, Council Tax and Benefits, Early Years, Parking, Insurance, HR recruitment, Client Finance to name a few.

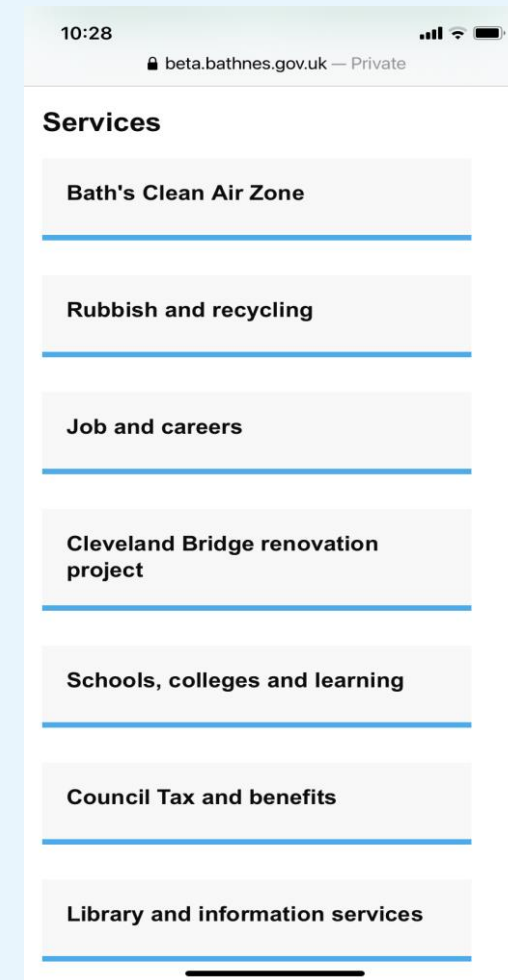
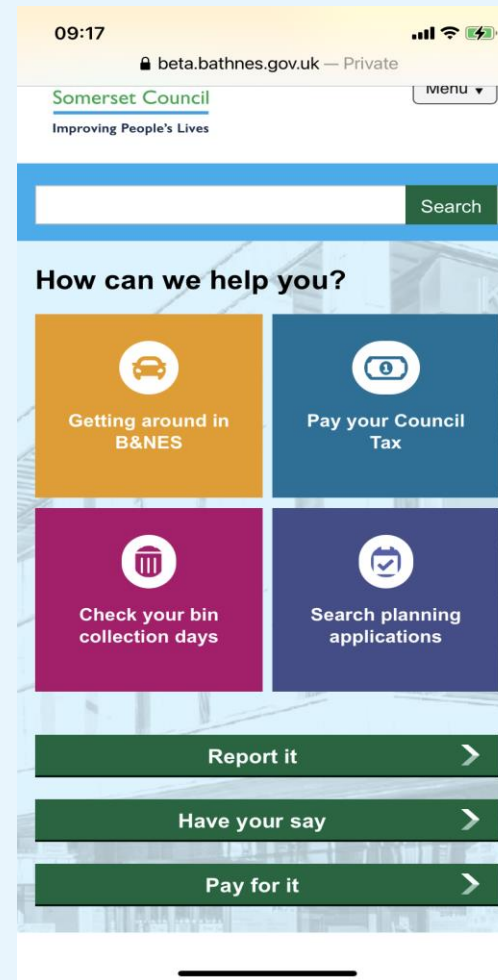
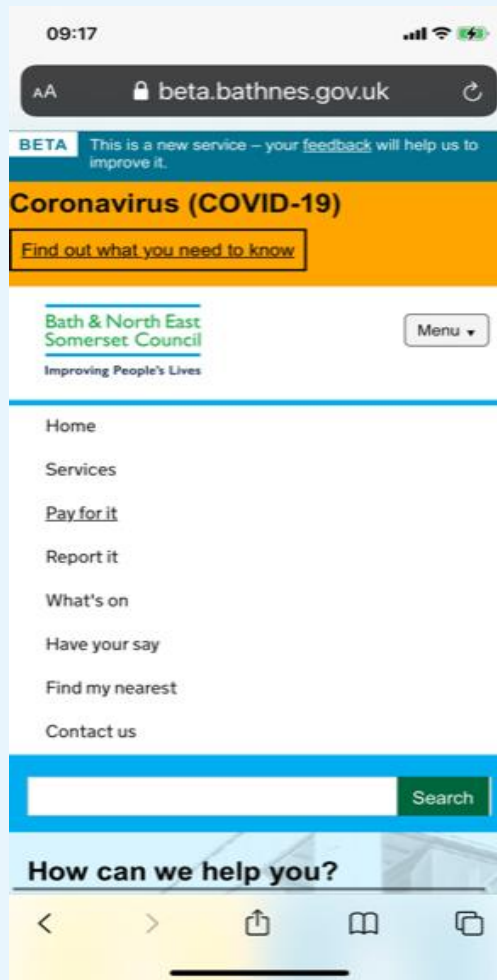
Emails and other social media contacts direct to service areas cannot be measured.



Council Connect and the Switchboard calls are handled by the same team but together they only represent a small percentage of the overall calls. Contact involves taking payments, giving advice, making bookings and signposting.

Libraries Information Advice Centres and Bath One Stop Shop offer face to face mediated support to take payments, provide welfare support, issue blue badges, advice about benefits, debts and homelessness.

Contact via the website



B&NES Fix My Street

The main system used to record reported environmental issues is **B&NES Fix My Street**

- Using a single system gives transparency for both residents and Councillors
- Provides a corporate view of the success stories or issues and gives us the ability to challenge our services to make service improvements to improve the customer experience
- Anyone reporting an issue can see if it has already been reported and the progress of previous reports
- Since B&NES FMS went live the percentage of people using it has risen from 39% in 2018 to 75% in 2021
- But: responses from FMS are not always 'user friendly' or detailed enough often due to complications regarding 3rd party land ownership/responsibility
- Further discovery work & user feedback needs to be undertaken
- Investment in further development and system changes from feeder systems is required
- Proactive communications/social media posts will help highlight benefits, celebrate successes and encourage usage

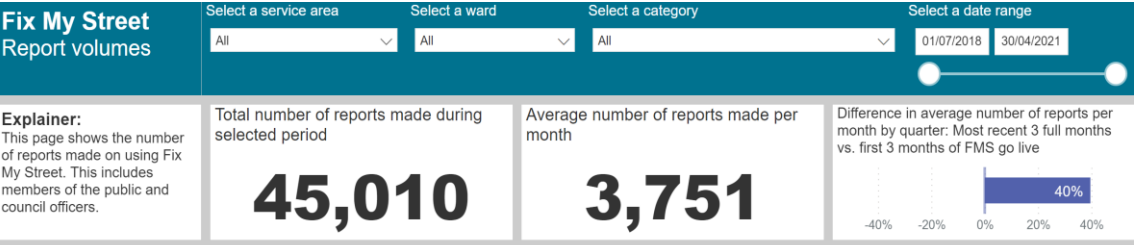
Report a problem
Roads, pavements, and parks

Enter a location in Bath and North East Somerset:
e.g. 'BA1 1JQ' or 'Lansdown Grove'

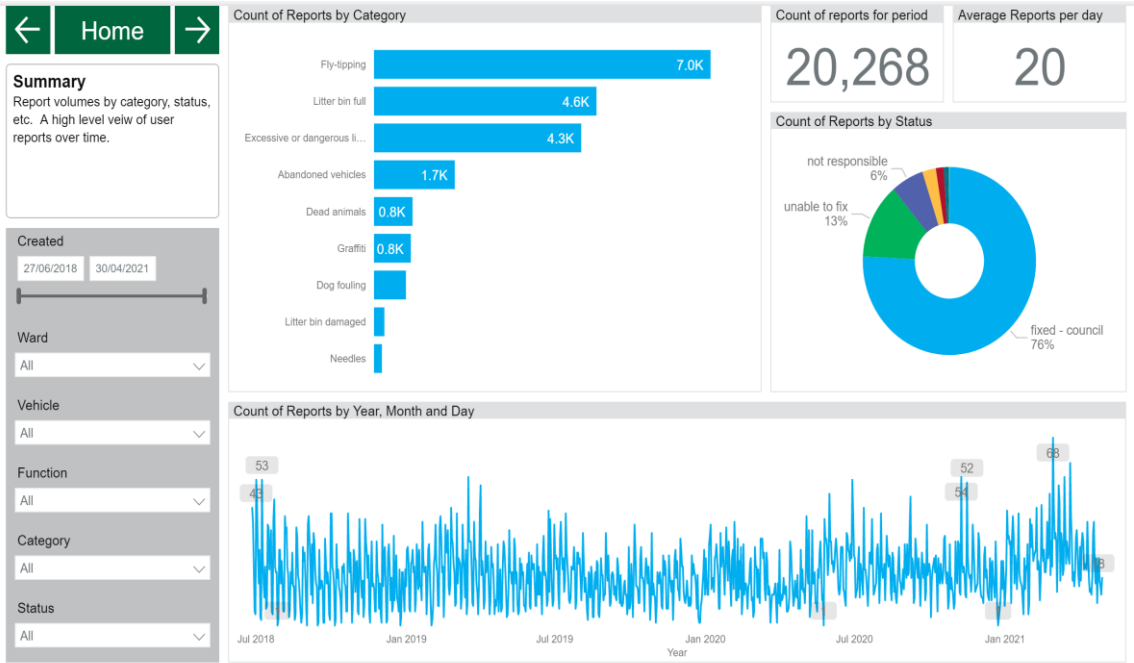
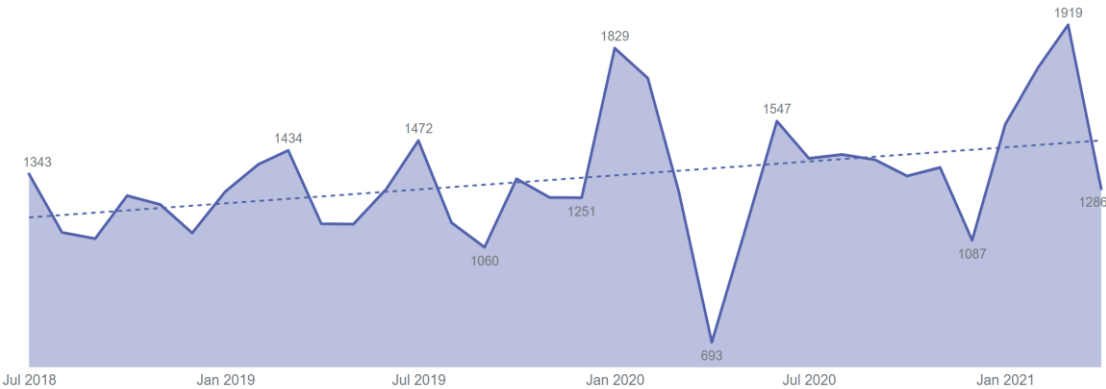
Go

↩ Use my current location

[Report other issues or make enquiries](#)
Report emergencies on 01225 39 40 41 (option 9).



Total number of reports by month

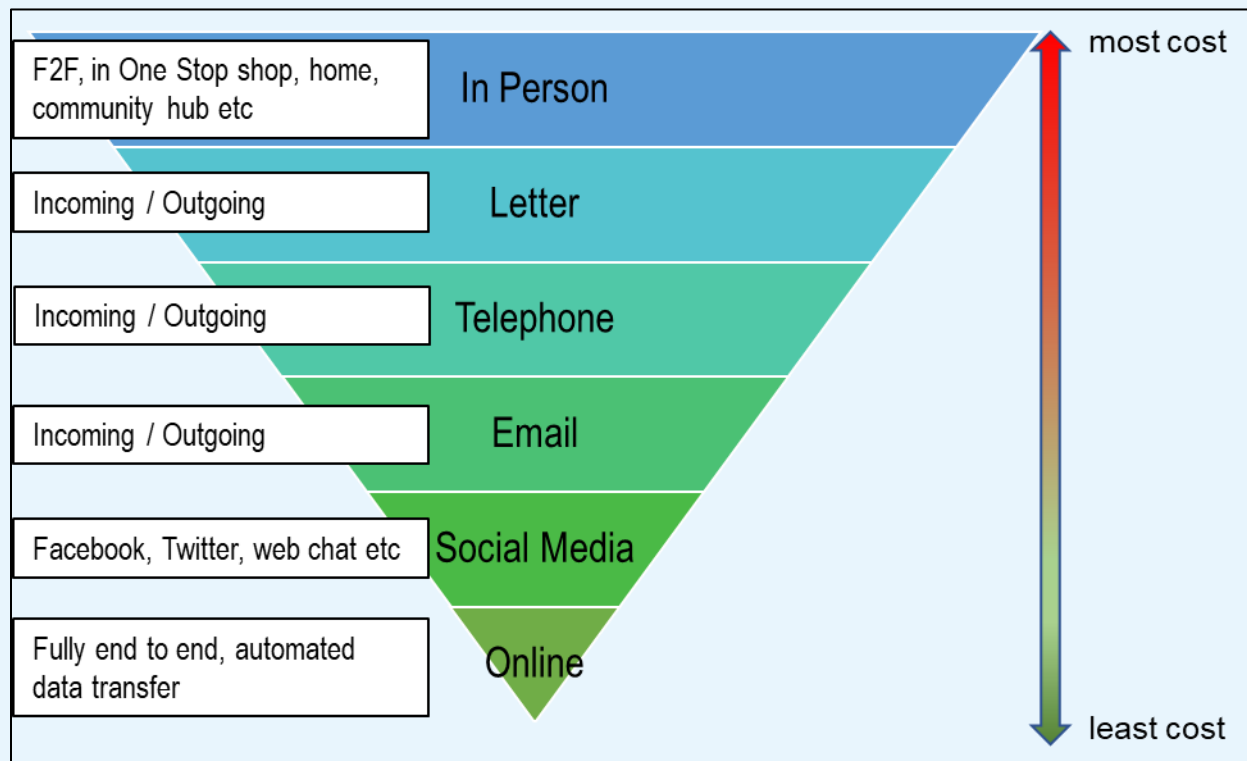


Customer Contact Strategy – what we know

- Customer expectations, demands and habits have changed, as well as due to Covid
- Major developments in technology and an increase in its use - 96% of households have access to the internet and 87% shopped online in the last 12 months (ONS).
- Our customers are increasingly using online methods to contact their bank, utilities, retailers, including outside of normal office hours
- A lot of our customers could be persuaded to change the way they contact us, *if we provide the right options for them to do so.*
- Our more vulnerable residents or those with complex needs are always likely to require support (face to face or telephone assistance). We must actively encourage those customers who can do so to self-serve to free up our resource to focus where it is needed.
- We are committed to reducing our carbon footprint as much as possible. Encouraging the use of online contacts, will mean less need for staff or customers to travel to/from our offices and reduce the use of paper channels.



Customer Contact Strategy – digital first



We need to adopt a digital first approach.

However, simply moving everything to online / self-serve channels is not the answer.

There are different levels of digital ability in B&NES along with varying degrees of connectivity in rural locations.

Where enquiries are complex, particularly those of a sensitive or personal nature, more intervention is likely to be required.

As a result we will always offer a telephone and face to face service.

Customer Contact Strategy – discovery

To identify the most appropriate channel for a service or customer group, we must understand our customers, the services they are requesting and any constraints, taking account of:

- Who our customers are, what they need, their use of different channels
- How, when, where, and to whom contact is made for services, the level of sensitivity and complexity.
- Baseline our current volumes, types, levels of demand
- What technology is available now and what is emerging.
- External factors, including partner organisations, political imperatives, legislation / regulation.
- How to ensure accessibility and digital inclusion.



Customer Contact Strategy – key principles

- Make access to services available through appropriate and effective contact channels.
- Have corporate customer service standards across the whole organisation.
- Ensure information provided across all contact channels is consistent, accurate, up to date.
- Be transparent about what we can / can't do, ensure customers understand next steps.
- Reduce repeat contacts by dealing with customer requests fully at first interaction.
- Work internally and with partners to provide a “joined up” approach to fulfilling customer's requests, reducing the need for multiple contacts.
- Encourage greater use of the most cost-efficient contact channels through deliberate and targeted promotional activities.
- Not discriminate against any group or individuals through limiting the choice of contact channels available.
- Work consistently to improve the effectiveness of all the channels; regularly reviewing options for different provision or new technologies.

How can you support us?

- Work together to produce this strategy
- Feedback to us the experiences of residents
- Sign post / coach residents about the right way to contact the Council
- Support the streamlining of ways to contact the Council
- Support continuous improvement and the digital first approach whilst maintaining accessibility and digital inclusion
- Use the Councillor resolution service so we highlight learning needs and areas for improvement



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