

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Customer Services Performance

Meeting/Date: Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships)
– 8th November 2018

Executive Portfolio: Councillor Darren Tysoe, Executive Councillor for Digital
and Customer

Report by: Customer Service Manager - Michelle Greet

Wards affected: All

RECOMMENDATION

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is invited to comment on the performance of the Customer Service Team which includes the Customer Service Centres in Huntingdon, St Neots, Ramsey, Yaxley and the Call Centre, which is based in Huntingdon. The latest statistical graphs are at Appendix A.

The performance summary also provides an update on the Automated Phone System introduced at the beginning of September 2018.

WHAT IS THIS SUMMARY ABOUT?

The Customer Service performance summary is intended to update councillors on the performance and progress within the Customer Services Department over the last 6 months.

WHY IS THIS NECESSARY?

As Customer Services are the front line and first contact for 1000s of customers it is important that we are always looking for opportunities to continuously improve. We do this by reviewing our management information to identify our strengths and opportunities to improve helping us ensure we are getting the best from our team and providing a service to be proud of to our customers.

Background to Service

HDC customer services team, are a shared team across the whole of HDC. They provide first line support for all services, and where necessary hand off calls to other services.

The Customer Service department offers customers Face to Face contact in Huntingdon, St Neots, Ramsey, Yaxley and the Call Centre which is based in Huntingdon, and the management of online and social media channels. There has been a shift in the nature of demand over the years, with surveys, other evidence and our volume of contacts demonstrating a desire for the public to do more online, and at their convenience rather than ours.

The service was consolidated in Huntingdon in 2016, with the Call Centre moving from its previous base in St Ives.

This move has allowed us to more dynamically resource across the various functions of the team. With decisions being made to move resources from the Call Centre to F2F, or to free people up to deal with electronic channels as required.

Evidence from both the public and private sector demonstrates a changing environment in relation to customer services, with new channels and customer behaviour changing expectations. We expect this to continue and will continue to respond to these challenges.

PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Our key corporate indicators are to answer 90% of all calls and for 80% of our customers to rate our service as good or excellent.

We have missed the answered calls target in 11 out of 12 months. Over the last 12 months we have answered 84% of calls on average, 16% of calls are abandoning due to long wait times. We are making good progress with a number of solutions, outlined below that demonstrate how we are seeking to address these challenges. One response would be to provide more resource, however evidence shows that a lot of this contact is 'avoidable' and does not add value to the customer, or the need could be met in another way.

We survey 10% of customers for one week every Qtr. and have an average response rate of 20%. The results show an overall satisfaction score of 91% of customers are satisfied or very satisfied with the service they're receiving. The only area that scored below 80% was for the speed at which the call was answered.

In response to these challenges, as part of the Council's Mosaic Transformation programme, an active project of LEAN improvement is taking place with back office services. Targeted at those services that generate the highest amount of avoidable contact into customer services, chasing for updates, ringing to clarify meanings of letters etc. This programme is ongoing but is beginning to deliver results in the back office that we believe will result in fewer calls to the call centre.

The resource challenges in customer services are also being addressed through the upgrade of our online capability, and replacement of our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The system which is now being implemented will enable customers to do more themselves, receive more regular updates on progress, and allow customer services to have a fuller view of all customer interactions. Meaning better services for customers, whilst reducing demand on Face to Face and phone channels. Work has started on this and it will be implemented in stages, on the basis of need and scale of demand over the next 12 months. These tools form the basis of demonstrations at the quarterly Digital Advisory Group, to ensure members can shape the solutions to the needs of their constituents.

We have also changed the way that we recruit for vacancies. Historically we have found that the length of time taken to recruit and train a new staff member was 6-9 months. Anyone leaving the team would only need to give 1 month notice. Therefore we were up to 8 months under resourced whilst we train up the new recruit. This problem put a lot of pressure on the team and affected customer wait times. This financial year we have taken a different approach, taking into account our average annual staff turnover and the impact this has on budgets, we have recruited 2 additional temporary staff members who are trained and ready to step in when vacancies arise. This has worked really well allowing us to instantly fill a recent vacancy, putting the team in a much stronger position whilst still operating within budget.

To help improve the speed of answering calls and make better use of resources we introduced a new Automated Phone System (APS), at the beginning of September 2018. This was identified as an opportunity for improvement as more and more customers call the switchboard number regardless of the service they needed, this would result in a high number of customers being connected with an advisor who did not have the skills required to answer their query, requiring them to be transferred internally and often resulting in them queuing for a second time. Understandably customers were not happy about this.

The new APS system has been in place for a month now and is proving beneficial to customers and staff. The improvements we have noticed are:

- APS gives us more control over the calls and enable us to direct the call to an Advisor who can help at the first point of contact – which is saving the customer time, improving their first impression of HDC and also making much more efficient use of the resources in the team. 70% of calls are resolved at the first point of contact.
- Internal transfers have reduced from 1231 in August to 321 in September. A 74% drop.
- Customers who call to report a missed bin before 3pm would have taken Advisors time to explain that a report can't be made before this time, now an automated message is on the "Bin" line so customers hear the message and hang up before they have been connected to an Advisor which is much more efficient. This had a positive impact on 43 calls during September.

- Training has improved significantly as we are now able to filter calls, meaning that once an advisor has been trained in a service they will have the opportunity to receive these in greater volume. This means that we can multi-skill much more quickly.
- In September we had 3 new starters and the APS enabled us to work through the training plan at a much greater pace and it looks like it will halve the time it takes to get someone multi skilled.

It's clear to see that the APS and other changes to proactively manage customer demand have been a success but this isn't enough to enable us to meet the answered calls target. We are more efficient and offering a better service to customers but long wait times will still happen from time to time if we experience peaks due to staffing issues, Council Tax bills/reminders, bad weather/frozen bins and green bin charging etc.

To enable customer services to meet the corporate indicator of answering 90% of calls we are looking at the opportunity for temporary resource between now and the customer portal being in place.

COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

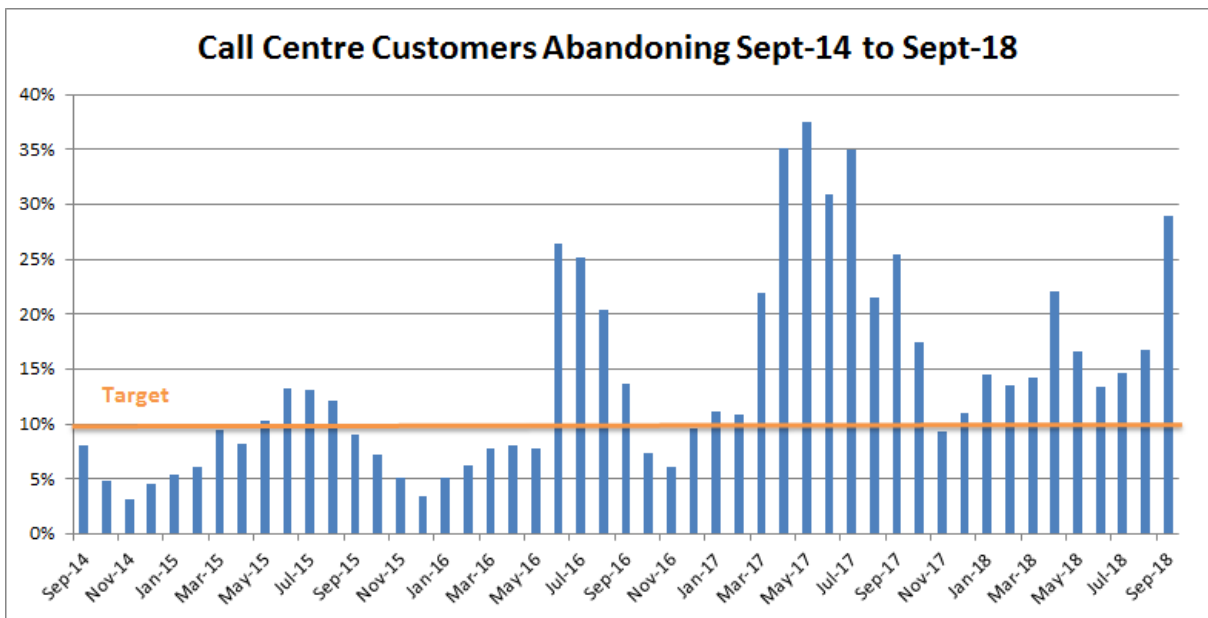
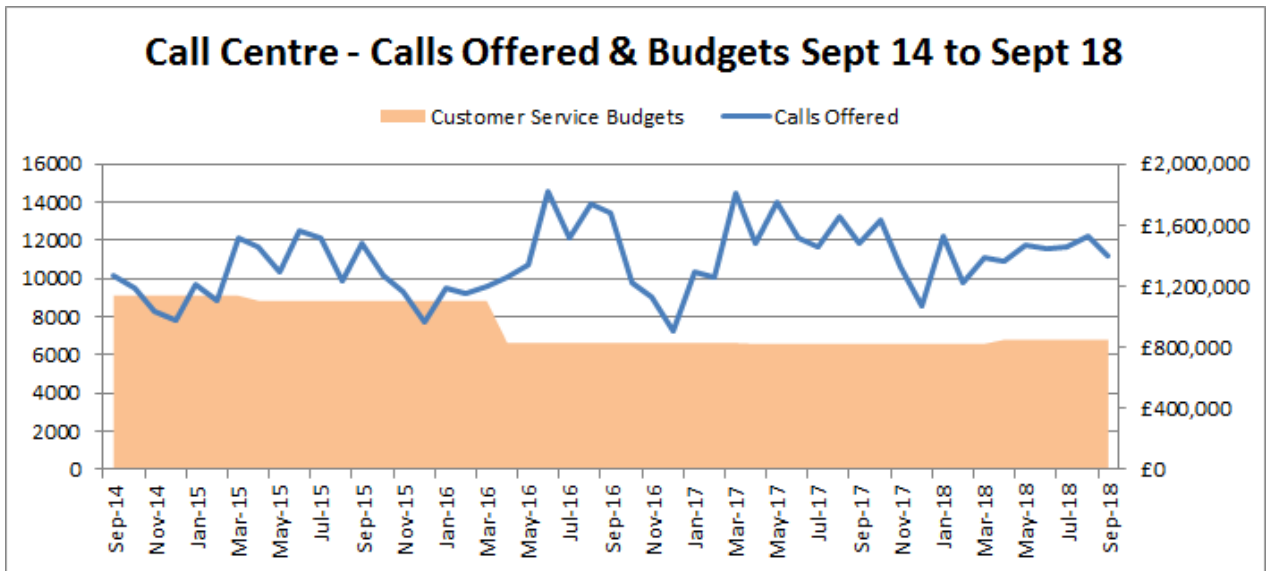
Feedback on the content of this report and requests for additional useful information from Members is welcomed.

CONTACT OFFICERS

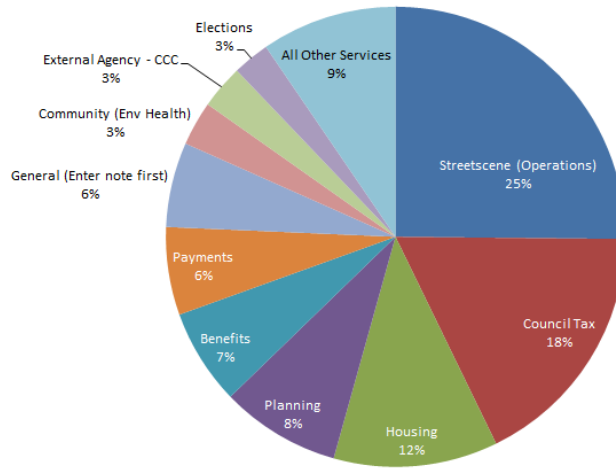
Michelle Greet – Customer Service Manager
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APPENDIX A

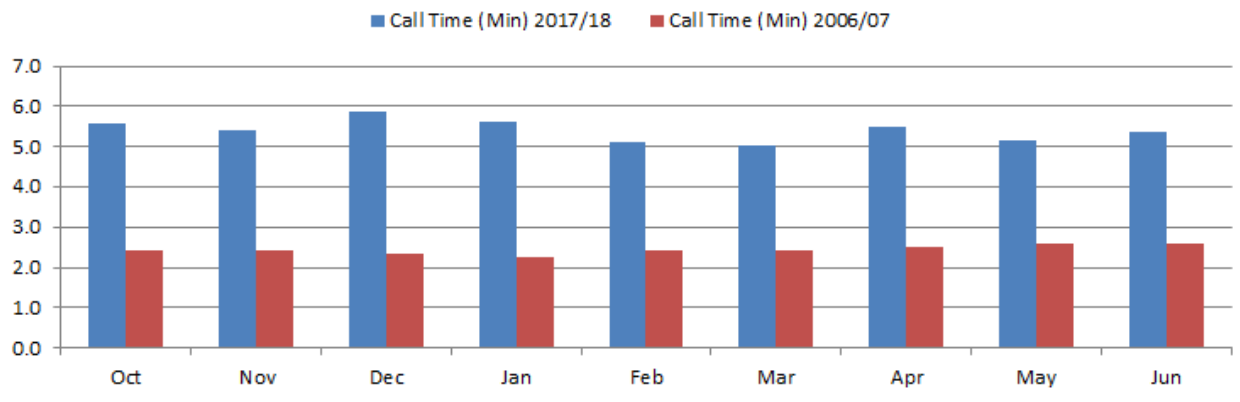
Call Centre



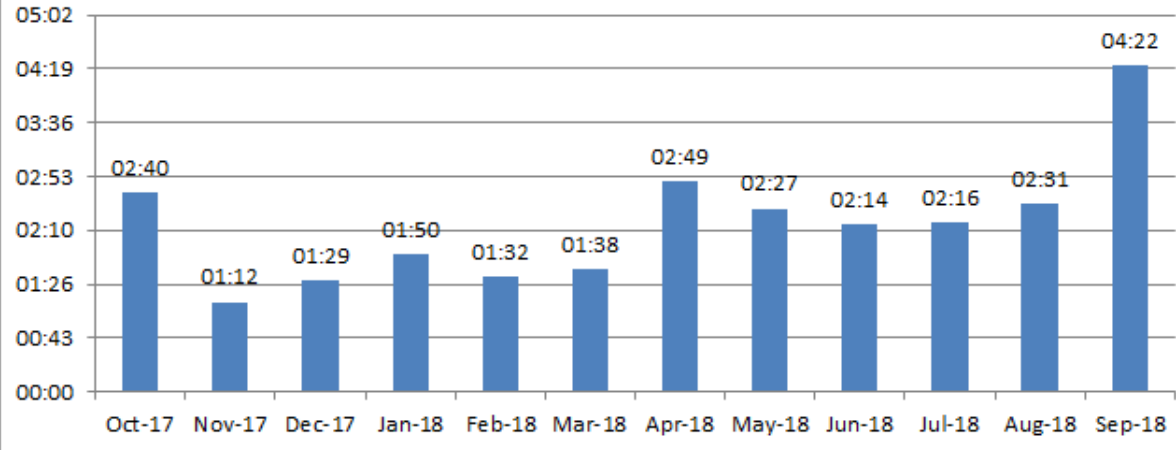
Call Centre Calls and Email Service Breakdown 2018



Average Call Time comparison 2017/18 vs 2006/07

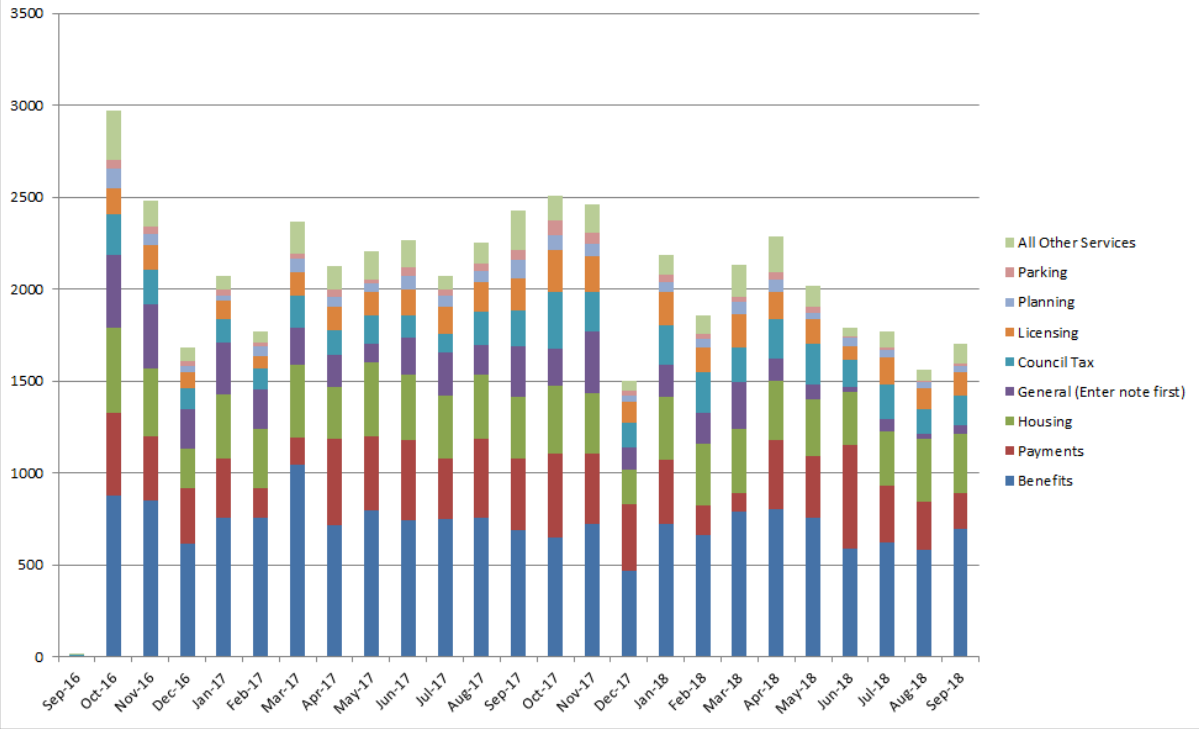


Call Centre - Average Wait Time

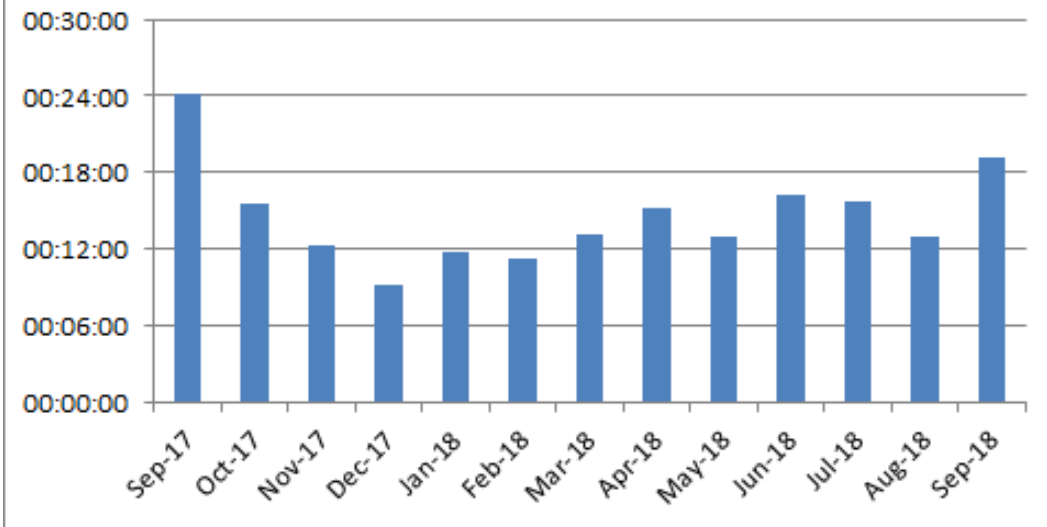


Huntingdon Customer Service Centre

Huntingdon Customer Service Centre - Breakdown of Services Accessed

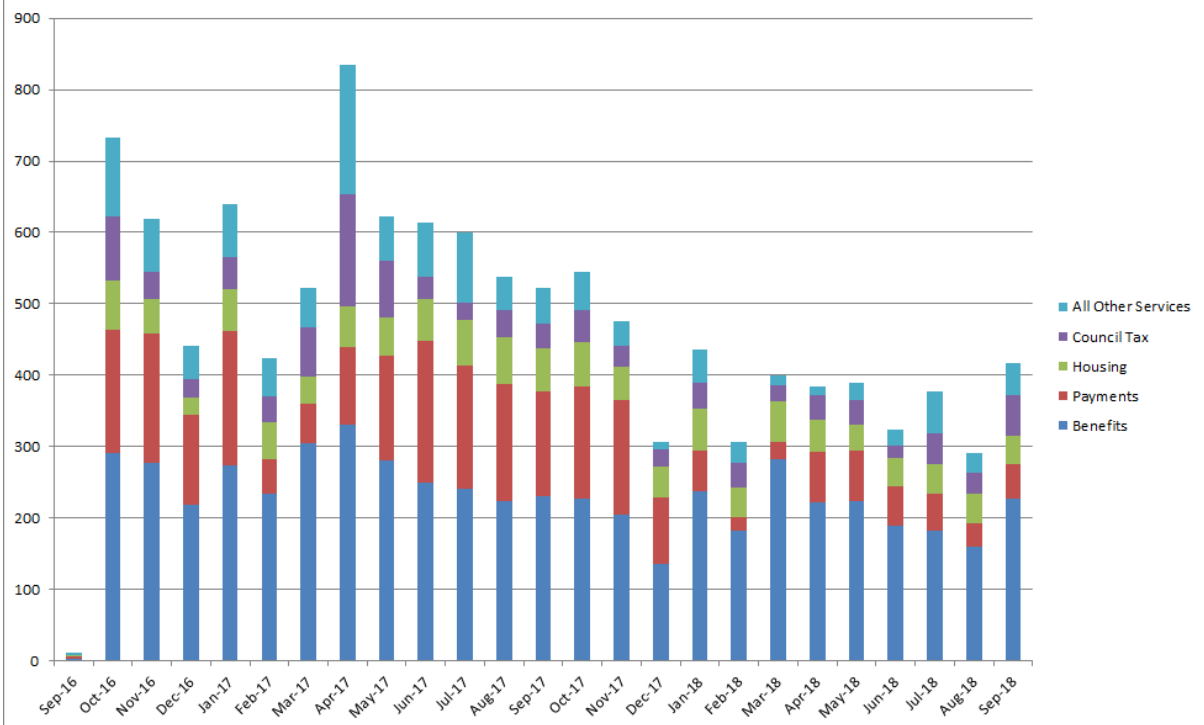


Huntingdon CSC Average Wait time

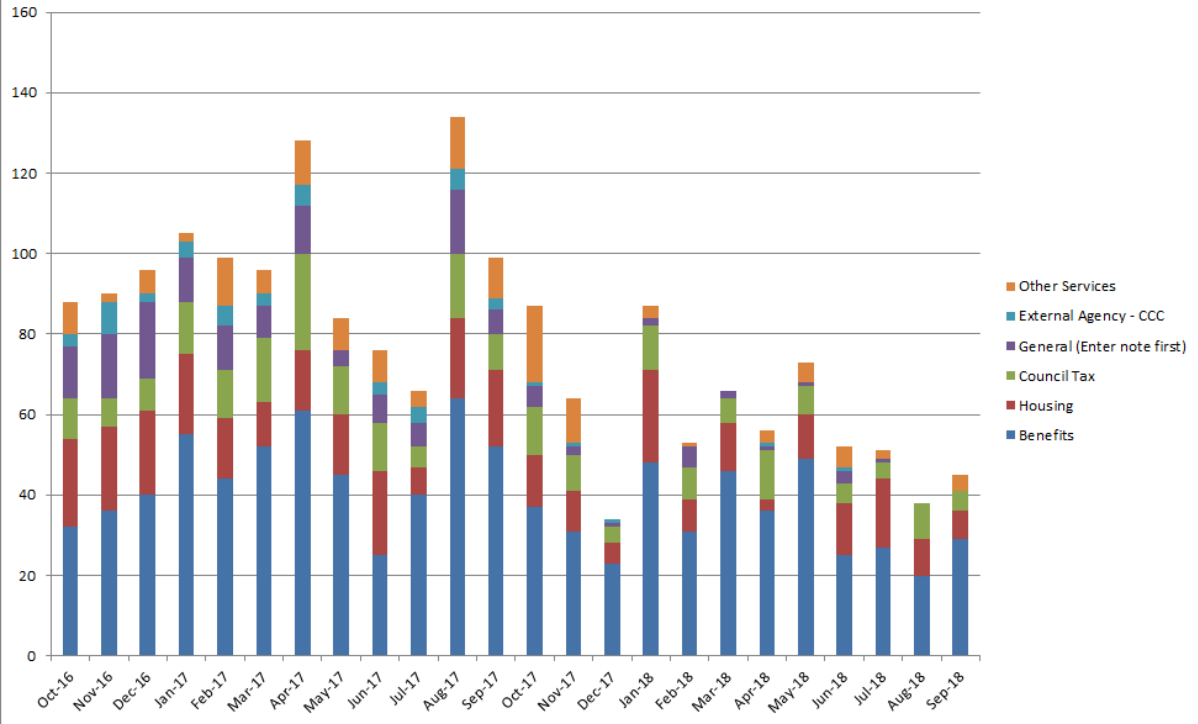


Satellite Customer Service Centres

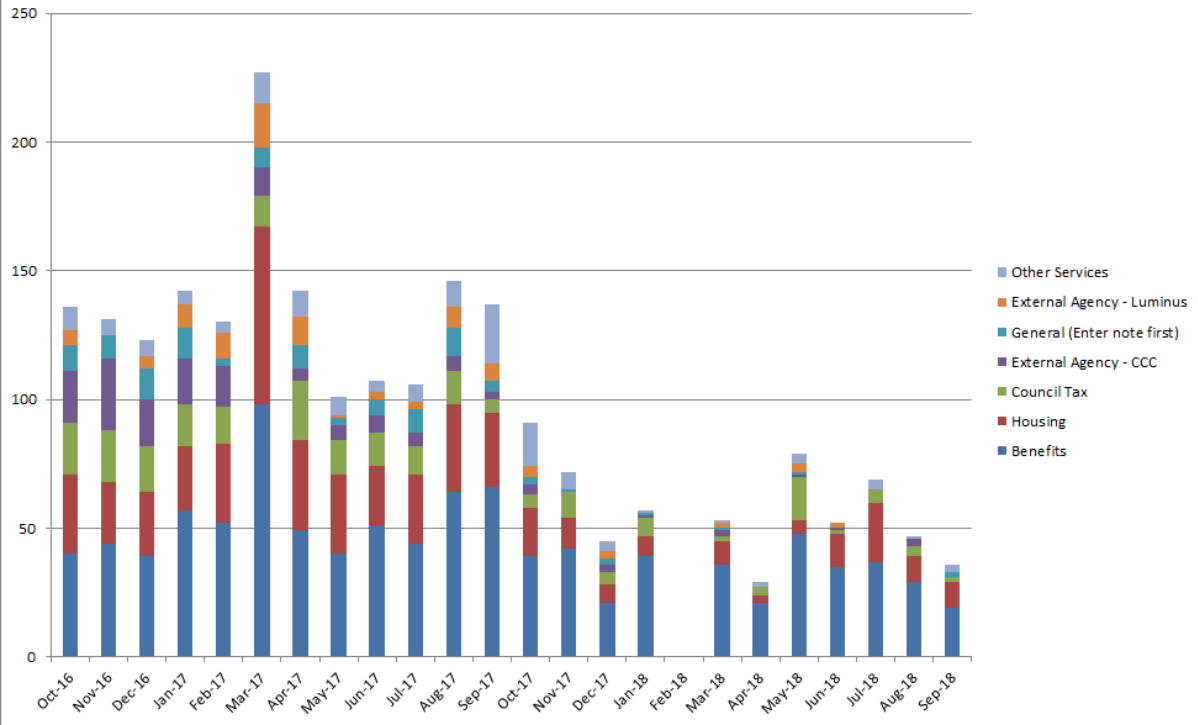
St Neots Customer Service Centre - Breakdown of Services Accessed



Ramsey Customer Service Centre - Breakdown of Services Accessed



Yaxley Customer Service Centre - Breakdown of Services Accessed



Customer Services

