

SPOTLIGHT ■ Benchmarking quality across the UK, sector by sector

customer experience spotlight

Public Sector: who comes out on top?

This month we called some major public sector organisations with a wide range of customer service enquiries. As usual, we broke the call down into the four key assessment areas, but this time we changed some of the assessment criteria to suit the more service-related calls we were making. As well as the usual criteria, we asked our team to look at how well the agents established the nature of our enquiry using relevant open and closed questions, the quality of the advice they were given, and how proactive the agents were in leading us to a solution.

The public sector is often perceived as lagging behind the private sector when it comes to delivering customer or stakeholder experiences, so it is good to see that no fewer than eight of the services we assessed have made it into the overall top twenty. The sector has made some real gains over the last 20 years in a time of dramatic change in the way local and central government agencies are organised and interact with us.

The trend towards outsourcing service delivery, which began under the Conservative government of the 1980s and has continued under Labour, has enabled the private and

public sectors to share best practice by working in partnership with one another. It has also given public bodies either direct or indirect access to methods designed to satisfy and retain customers.

Major advances in technology, which have allowed us to communicate more efficiently and cost effectively, and the growth first of the call centre, and then the contact centre, have enabled organisations to manage high volume, multi-channel interactions with their stakeholders. All of these trends have helped lead the public sector towards an increasingly professional and customer-

RANK	COMPANY	OVERALL SCORE	WELCOME	FIND OUT	SHOW HOW	CLOSE
1	Learn Direct	68.89	61.40	60.71	73.15	100.00
2	National Blood Service	67.04	78.95	59.52	67.59	61.90
3	The Royal Air Force	66.84	87.72	55.95	62.04	78.05
4	The Royal Navy	65.19	68.42	57.14	67.59	76.19
5	TDA Teaching Helpline	65.10	71.93	47.62	71.30	85.71
6	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	64.44	80.70	58.33	59.26	71.43
7	NHS Stop Smoking Hotline	63.33	70.18	53.57	66.67	66.67
8	Sheffield City Council	62.96	80.70	59.52	58.33	52.38
9	Liverpool City Council	62.59	70.18	57.14	62.96	61.90
10	Transport for London	62.22	56.14	54.76	64.81	95.24
11	The Army	59.63	70.18	48.81	61.11	66.67
12	Business Link	59.26	66.67	51.19	60.19	66.67
13	Birmingham City Council	56.67	71.93	50.00	53.70	57.14
14	Defra (Pets Passport Scheme)	53.75	61.40	52.38	57.41	57.14
15	Croydon Council	53.70	54.39	50.00	56.48	52.38
16	Leeds City Council	50.74	49.12	53.57	49.07	52.38
17	DVLA	48.89	42.11	51.19	49.07	57.14
18	Glasgow City Council	48.15	45.61	46.43	48.15	61.90
19	The Student Loan Company	47.04	36.84	40.48	56.48	52.38
20	Office of Fair Trading	29.26	61.40	20.24	19.44	28.57

Please note that the above figures represent the view of our customer experience assessors and are based on a sample of calls assessed using a consistent point system. All comments and scores represent the opinions of the maia spotlight team.

focused way of delivering services.

The public sector faces unique challenges too. Contact centres often have to deal with very high volumes of traffic and are far more prone to big spikes in activity caused by major national events, for example. The diverse customer base also has a wide range of demands, ranging from information on rubbish collection days to detailed advice on consumer law. These daily challenges are reflected in the exacting service level targets many government departments have traditionally set for contact centres based around answering calls and enquiries quickly and efficiently.

The services we assessed this month were generally delivered efficiently, scoring well for ease of use and time to answer. They were also delivered professionally, achieving high scores for service knowledge and for resolving the enquiry.

Where the industry needs to improve is in taking time to build rapport with the customer and in proactively taking control of the call to find out more about what customers actually need, rather than what they say the want. This will help to build strong relationships and reinforce the customer's perception of the value they are getting from their taxes.

Under 25% Poor customer experience.

Urgent investigation and action required.

25-50% Functional level of customer service. Improvement recommended.

50-75% Good level of customer experience. Certain elements may need enhancement.

Over 75% Excellent customer experience.

Any questions or comments regarding the customer experience spotlight may be addressed to the spotlight team at maia on +44 870 7744220 or by email to: spotlight@maiaigroup.co.uk

maia consulting

Welcome: sector score 64%

A good score, which compares favourably with other industry sectors. The public sector scored particularly well in customer connectivity (76%) — we found it easy to locate the person we needed using well structured IVR menus and direct dial numbers. The sector achieved a lower than average score for giving the name of the agent and the organisation.

Find out: sector score 51%

As with all sectors so far, the weakest area of the spotlight. The sector achieved average scores for appropriate questioning and for clarifying information. The agents found out just enough to be able to establish our basic needs and answer our initial enquiry, but did not ask any more probing questions to really add value to the interaction.

Show how: sector score 58%

The agents were well-informed, scoring 65% for knowledge, and used the information at their disposal well, achieving a 65% score for giving appropriate advice. We also found the agents to be clear, courteous, and well paced.

One area for improvement is proactive solution finding, with only a score of 50% for taking control of the call.

Close: sector score 65%

The highest score yet for any industry sector. Nobody hung up on us before we'd finished the call, and 92% of agents agreed on a course of action for the customer to resolve their enquiry. A strong call close leaves the customer with a lasting impression of their customer experience and is a hallmark of professional contact centres.

OVERALL LEAGUE TABLE

RANK	COMPANY	SCORE	SECTOR
1	Thomas Cook	75.7	Leisure and tourism
2	nPower	72.7	Telecoms and utilities
3	First Direct	70.7	Financial services
4	esure	70.7	Financial services
5	British Gas	70.7	Telecoms and utilities
6	Thomson	69.5	Leisure and tourism
7	Butlins	69.0	Leisure and tourism
8	Learn Direct	68.9	Public sector
9	HSBC	67.7	Financial services
10	Orange	67.3	Telecoms and utilities
11	National Blood Service	67.0	Public sector
12	The Royal Air Force	66.8	Public sector
13	Red Letter Days	66.4	Leisure and tourism
14	Carphone Warehouse (Talk Talk)	66.3	Telecoms and utilities
15	The Royal Navy	65.2	Public sector
16	TDA Teaching Helpline	65.1	Public sector
17	Avis	64.7	Leisure and tourism
18	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	64.4	Public sector
19	NHS Stop Smoking Hotline	63.3	Public sector
20	Sheffield City Council	63.0	Public sector