

WELL-BEING OBJECTIVE 9:

Provide efficient customer focussed services that reflect the way people live their lives and wish to access services

Providing efficient, customer-focused services that reflect how people live and wish to access support ensures services are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to real needs. It helps build trust with our customers, improves satisfaction, and encourages engagement by offering flexible options—whether online, in-person, or through community-based channels. By aligning our services with people's lifestyles, we can reduce barriers, improve outcomes, and make public services more effective and equitable for everyone.

Our 'Digital First' Customer Strategy was adopted in May 2023 and aims to use digital solutions and data insights to improve the customer experience and our operational efficiency.

Throughout 2024/25, there has been a range of activity that has taken place, to further improve the digital services that we offer and access support to use them.

This work includes making ongoing improvements to our digital forms and processes, the introduction of a new Contact Centre platform, and providing ICT and Digital support to residents at our libraries.



The digital first principle, is that those that can transact with the council digitally, can do so via easy-to-use services. It does not mean "digital only" therefore telephony and face-face provision will continue to remain available. It also seeks to ensure that our customers are supported to develop the skills and access to devices and connectivity to engage digitally, if that is their preference.

In August 2024, we received a report from Audit Wales on our Digital Strategy. The review examined our strategic approach to digital, with a particular focus on how well it aligns with the sustainable development principle. Audit Wales provided a series of specific recommendations on the identification of resources to deliver our strategy, improving arrangements for monitoring and reviewing our strategy and strengthening engagement opportunities. These recommendations are being addressed and progress will be reported through our Scrutiny Committees in 2025/26. A full copy of the report is available [here](#).

Digital Services

We currently have over 200 digital forms available via our website and app for the submission of service requests (English and Welsh).

Forms are available 24/7 and are passed on to the relevant service area, straight away. Work is ongoing to join systems up so that customers have better insight on the status of their request and what is being done, potentially avoiding the need for customers to get back in contact with the council to find out.

Over the past six years, there have been high levels of service requests, being raised by customers using the website and/or MCS app.

Data for 2020/21 and 2021/22 is considered an outlier, as it covers the period affected by Covid-19, during which a number of temporary/new services were made available which include requests for: Key Worker Forms, Food Parcels, Application for FSM Pupils, Community Farm Booking, Recycling Centre Booking etc.

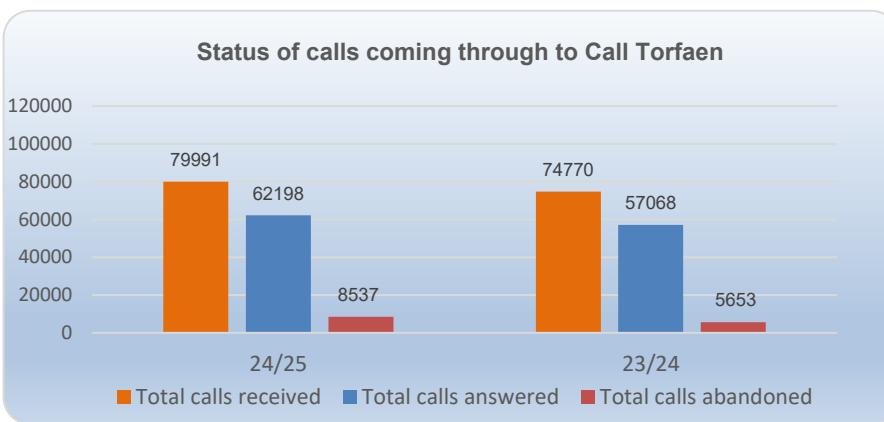
However, data does indicate the increased take up of digital services during Covid-19 has been sustained from 2022/23 onwards, particularly when compared to self-service volumes, pre-Covid-19. The percentage of service requests submitted online by customers versus those raised on a customer's behalf over the phone or in person by Customer Care was 71% in 2024/25. This compares with 74% in 2022/2023. This is important as there is a clear link between the availability, effectiveness and take-up of our digital services on demand management and Customer Care Performance. For example, by supporting and encouraging customers to self-serve digitally through the council's website and/or app, Customer Care resources can be more focussed on supporting digitally excluded customers, or those with more complex needs, over the phone or in-person (via our appointment provision).

Customer Care – Call Torfaen

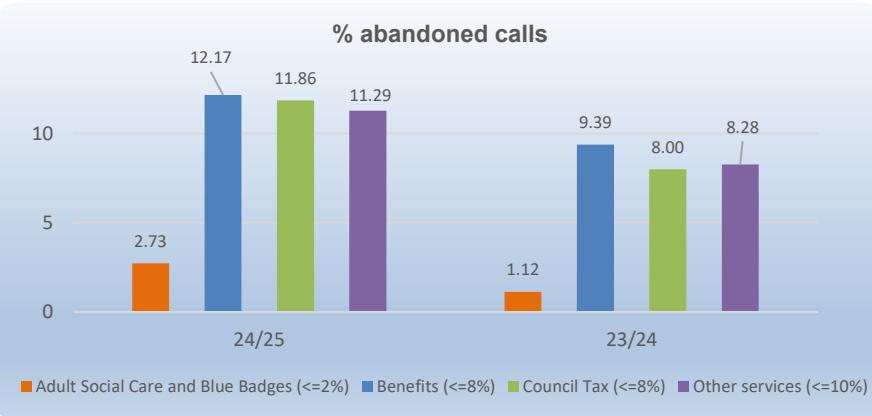
The majority of calls received into our Customer Care contact centre, relate to the following services:

- Adult Services and Blue Badges
- Revenues
- Benefits
- Economy and Environment
- Elections
- Welsh Language Calls
- Member Enquiries

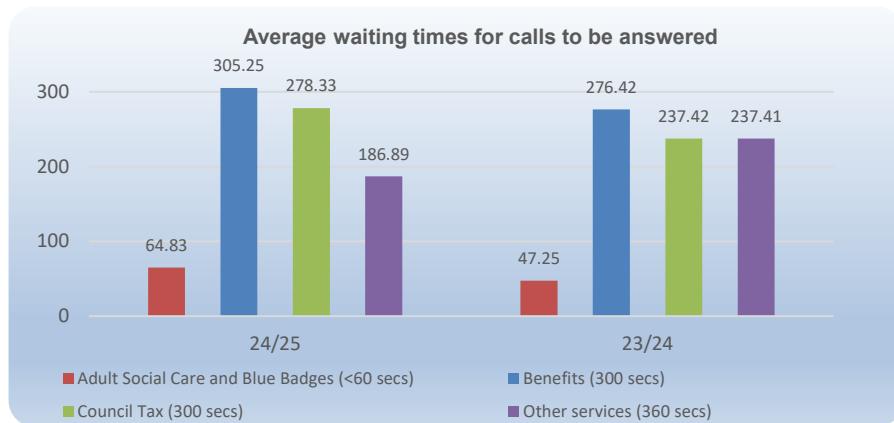
Performance of our Customer Care Centre is monitored and managed through the use of standard contact centre metrics, such as: Average Wait Times and Abandon Rates:



In comparison to last year, **the total number of calls received** has increased. Most positively, in spite of an increase in the number of calls received, the number of calls being answered is also higher, which demonstrates an improved customer journey.

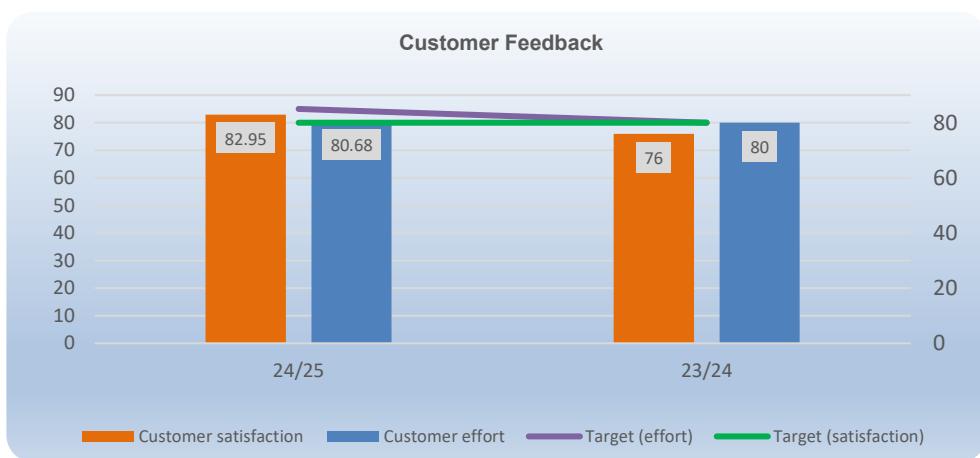


The number of **calls abandoned**, cannot be compared over the last two years, as the way in which we calculated this measured changed, due to the implementation of a new telephony system, in October 2024. Previously, we discounted calls that had abandoned within 60 seconds, but we have now since reduced this to <15 seconds.



Although the **average waiting time** has increased, so has the number of calls answered. With the introduction of the new telephony platform, the voicemail facility that was on adult services/Blue Badge calls was replaced by a call back facility. Figures suggest that customers are happy to wait to be answered, therefore we plan to review this measure in 25/26.

Feedback from our customers, who contact Call Torfaen direct, is very positive and generally scores a 5 (Excellent). Where improvements can be made however, is to better join-up back-office processes, as this is where negative comments have been reflected.



Going forward, we are planning to introduce an option for all customers contacting Call Torfaen, to opt in to providing feedback, after officers have handled their call. This will provide real time results, based on customer experience and will also be implemented alongside, other local authorities such as Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire and Newport, which will enable us to benchmark each other against, in future.

Customer effort seeks to capture how easy a customer found it to complete their interaction/transaction with our council and can be influenced by a number of factors, which are not necessarily under the control of our Customer Care – Call Torfaen Team.

Insight from feedback received throughout 24/25, highlights issues with customers finding information online and customers not receiving service updates. Work is therefore ongoing to develop our ability to automatically inform customers of updates in some high-volume areas, such as highways, streetlights, drainage and trees, through the integration of service area systems with our CRM.

Further work is also being undertaken to analyse and share findings with service areas, to develop actionable activities and insights, which will improve customer experience from 2025/2026.

In conclusion, our continued focus on taking a digital first and customer focused approach to manage customer demand continues to support improvements in the customer experience and our operational delivery. Through the implementation of our Digital First Customer Strategy, we have continued to improve our self-service options while maintaining inclusive support for those with more complex needs. The use of evolving digital tools and solutions such as Artificial Intelligence, more joined-up systems and processes, enhanced feedback mechanisms, and ongoing service improvements reflect our commitment to putting residents at the heart of service design.

As we move into 2025/26, we remain dedicated to using data and insight to further enhance customer experience and ensure our services are accessible, equitable, and aligned with the needs of our communities.

Our Key Challenges...

Digital Transformation:

- Digital transformation is a key challenge because it requires organizations to fundamentally rethink how they operate, deliver services, and engage with stakeholders. It involves not just adopting new technologies, but also reshaping processes, upskilling staff, and overcoming cultural resistance to change. The complexity of integrating modern systems with older infrastructure, ensuring data security, and aligning transformation efforts with strategic goals makes it a demanding and often a disruptive journey.
- Delivering our strategy will require targeted investment, either on an invest-to-save basis or through the reinvestment of efficiencies identified, via our annual delivery plan. Business cases will be developed in line with our project management governance.
- We will also explore opportunities to secure additional grant funding to support our ambitions. Moving forward, we aim to accelerate digital-led service transformation by leveraging available tools, enabling staff to adopt more digital ways of working. To demonstrate impact, we will consistently apply our Benefit and Value framework to capture and communicate the benefits of digital transformation.