Birmingham City Council

1.1 million citizens

Birmingham City Council is responsible for providing a comprehensive range of education, housing, social care, road and leisure services to over 1.1 million citizens in the UK's second biggest city.

2,190,000 emails and calls every year

eptica
MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS

The challenge

Local authorities in the UK face twin challenges – they need to increase efficiency and become more productive, while ensuring that they provide a high quality experience to all of their citizens. And with more and more people wanting to interact with the public sector through digital channels they have to embrace new technology in order to meet changing needs.

> Our citizens rely on us for everything from education to repairing potholes. We needed to find a way of delivering faster, more consistent responses, while still ensuring we operated as efficiently as possible."
>
> Georgina Foxwell,
> Head of Service Improvement for Customer Services
> Birmingham City Council

Given its size and the wide range of services that it provides, Birmingham City Council also has the challenge of delivering at scale. Different services are busy at different times of the year – meaning it has to be able to respond quickly and efficiently to all queries, whatever channel they come through. Ensuring front-line agents have the right information to respond to queries consistently is therefore vital, while the council also needed to be able to understand how it was performing, to enable further improvements.

The solution

With customer expectations continually rising, and a need to focus on greater efficiency, BCC adopted Eptica's artificial intelligence-powered customer experience platform. This has enabled it to increase the speed of response to citizen enquiries, while boosting productivity and delivering an improved, consistent experience across different channels.

Knowledge at the heart of service

BCC originally rolled out *Sheldon*, its Eptica-powered knowledge base, to its 300 contact centre agents who answer voice calls, providing them with fast access to an expanding library of 1,300 articles, covering subjects across 17 different subject areas, from potholes and Council Tax payments to school admissions. As *Sheldon* provides agents with a single source of information, this ensures that responses are consistent and accurate across different channels. Named by staff after a character in TV show, The Big Bang Theory, *Sheldon* also enables agents to provide feedback on articles, allowing them to be continually improved.
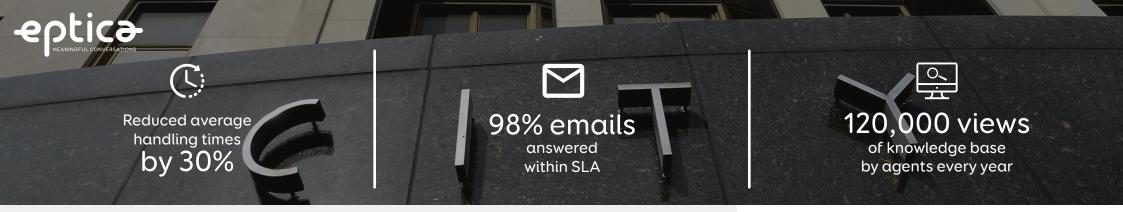
> By giving our agents access to the right information at the right time Eptica enables them to improve consistency and the experience they provide, while ensuring efficiency and boosting productivity."
>
> Georgina Foxwell,
> Head of Service Improvement for
> Customer Services
> Birmingham City Council

AI to drive greater productivity

Due to *Sheldon*'s success Eptica has been extended to cover BCC's growing email channel, replacing a range of desktop mailboxes and solutions. With the latest version of *Sheldon*, rolled out in Q2 2017, incoming emails and web forms from 25 services are analysed automatically using Eptica's natural language processing technology, providing agents with relevant template-based answers that they then personalise, helping them to respond to the 90,000 emails received every year.

Reduced average handling times by 30%

98% emails answered within SLA

120,000 views of knowledge base by agents every year

The benefits

Since adopting Eptica, Birmingham City Council is seeing benefits in five key areas:

1 - Greater efficiency

By empowering agents through instant access to the right information, BCC has been able to reduce response times. Average handling times for the 90,000 emails it receives every year have dropped by 30% to 6 hours and 52 minutes. 98% now receive a response within the Council's SLA of two business days.

2 - Improved consistency

With a single, centralised knowledge base BCC knows that staff are providing the same responses to citizens, ensuring consistency – and as information is shared across channels, *Sheldon* only needs to be updated once, when answers change.

3 - More detailed reporting

Continually improving performance is central to meeting customer expectations. BCC is now benefiting from more detailed information on response times, across every service. As managers can see exactly what knowledge base responses were accessed,

and cross-reference against call quality metrics, they can also highlight where additional staff training is required.

4 - Easy to use and administer

Despite the growing size of its knowledge base, with new answers added each day, Eptica is managed by just one person. It is quick to update and agents find it simple to access information, and to provide feedback on answers so that they are continually being improved.

5 - A platform for future growth

With Eptica embedded in operations, BCC now has a platform that can be easily extended to new channels. It is evaluating areas including self-service, social media and chat, using the knowledge base to provide fast, consistent answers and therefore improving the overall experience.

2 questions to...

Georgina Foxwell
Head of Service Improvement
for Customer Services,
Birmingham City Council

What challenges do you face as an organisation?

"As with the entire public sector the council is looking to increase efficiency, while at the same time providing a fast, efficient service to citizens, whatever channel they use to contact us. Given our size and the wide range of services we provide, balancing efficiency and a high quality, consistent experience is crucial."

How is Eptica enabling you to meet your goals?

"Eptica provides an AI-based platform for our customer service that is built on a single source of knowledge. By centralising information and making it available to agents on multiple channels we can improve response times, consistency and quality, all while increasing efficiency and productivity. It is a win-win for the council and its citizens."

Would you like to know more? Request a demo or visit our blog: www.eptica.com.