



Improvement

Customer led transformation programme

Case study – Bristol City Council

‘One Place’ Project

Contents

About About Bristol City	3
Background	4
Objective	5
Approach	6
Findings	8
Outcomes	14
Benefits	20
Strategic benefits	23
Governance	24
Resourcing	25
Challenges and Lessons Learnt	25
Next Steps	26

The Customer Led Transformation Programme

Bristol City Council's work has been funded under the Customer Led Transformation programme. The fund aims to embed the use of Customer Insight and Social Media tools and techniques as strategic management capabilities across the public sector family in order to support Place-Based working.

The Customer Led Transformation programme is overseen by the Local Government Delivery Council (supported by the Local Government Association).

The fund was established specifically to support collaborative working between local authorities and their partners focused on using customer insight and social media tools and techniques to improve service outcomes. These approaches offer public services bodies the opportunity to engage customers and gather insight into their preferences and needs, and thereby provide the evidence and intelligence needed to redesign services to be more targeted, effective and efficient.

About Bristol City

Bristol is a large thriving city with a long history. With a population of over 441,300 people, and serving a large hinterland, it is the largest city in the south west of England. It is also a cosmopolitan and multicultural city with a black and minority ethnic population of around 13.5 per cent.

The city is served by a unitary authority – Bristol City Council (BCC) – with a Leader and Cabinet model and 70 councillors.

Overall the city is prosperous with many highly skilled and qualified residents and high numbers of students attending two universities. According to Mosaic, Bristol has over three times the number of 'young, well educated, city dweller' households than the UK average. The most popular areas of employment include public services, aerospace, defence and technology.

The area has high quality green spaces for people to relax and enjoy their leisure time. It is ambitious to be known as a green and sustainable city where people are encouraged to use cycling as a form of transport – the headquarters of Sustrans (a national charity which promotes travel by foot, bike or public transport) is in Bristol. It is a major centre for museums and the arts with a wide range of music and cultural entertainment.

Although the area is affluent overall, there are some areas which do not share the city's prosperity and these are located alongside areas of affluence. Bristol has 32 Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the most deprived 10 per cent in England for multiple deprivation. Of these 14 are in the most deprived 5 per cent and 1 is in the most deprived 1 per cent. The number of people living in the most deprived 10 per cent of LSOAs is 60,665 people, which is 14 per cent of all residents living in Bristol.



Most people in the city are healthy and residents are living longer. However, although the gap is reducing, people live eight years longer in affluent areas than in the most deprived areas.

Crime in the city is now at its lowest level since 1989, recorded crimes have dropped by 40 per cent over the last decade, which means that there are 33,351 fewer recorded crimes per year.

Background

Bristol City Council has an Integrated Customer Services (ICS) unit which provides a customer contact handling function. It deals with 1.25m transactions a year for 26 Bristol City Council services.

The budget for 2010/11 was £4m for the Customer Service Centres (CSC) and £2.5m for the Customer Service Points (CSP) respectively. Access is through three channels:

- **Customer Service Centre** – (telephones) based at Somerfield House. This currently accounts for 60 per cent of the volume of customer contacts per annum across all channels. Average transaction cost per customer contact is £4.62.
- **Customer Service Points** – (face to face) 7 locations across the city with the flagship at Phoenix Court in the centre. This currently accounts for 25 per cent of the total volume of customer contacts per annum across all channels. Average transaction cost per customer contact is £7.03.
- **Self serve** – for example, Scan coin (cash handling equipment), web forms and automated pay line. This currently accounts for 15 per cent of the volume of the customer contacts per annum across all channels. Average transaction cost per customer contact is £0.40.

The most popular transactions (by volume) into CSC are calls to the switchboard (26 per cent) however, in terms of handling transaction (volume by duration) calls related to the benefits service are the longest at 22 per cent of the total time.



The most popular transactions into CSP are visits related to benefits (33.4 per cent) and in terms of handling time (volume by duration) benefits accounts for 48.6 per cent of total time.

Over the years the ICS function has grown organically without any over arching strategy and provides the first point of contact for a range of council services including the payment of council tax and rent bills, tenancy issues and environmental services such as reporting noise complaints or antisocial behaviour and applying for concessionary travel card or blue badge, etc. It should be noted, however, that ICS is not responsible for all the customer facing activities that the council undertakes and exclude services such as libraries, parks, leisure, etc.

It is believed that the overall volume of customer contact made with BCC across other services (outside ICS) is significantly higher but there are currently no readily available figures that quantify overall

volumes. However, as an example the statistics for Libraries Services for 2010 are as follows.

There are currently 28 Libraries across Bristol that handle over than 4m contacts annually such as materials issued (2m), Total visits (1.8m), Enquiries (242K), use of Peoples Network facilities 241 machines used for (210,524) hours, virtual visits to website (3.8m).

Against this background the ICS service has identified a number of challenges for the current organisation:

- maintaining and improving current service levels in parallel with decreasing budgets
- restrictions and cuts to service budgets will impact on service levels for processes supported and partially delivered by ICS
- the organisation is developing future operating models for some directorates, which will impact on ICS, and could require ICS to develop new capabilities or functions to deliver part or all of a customer pathway or business process
- the corporate ICT infrastructure is also being modernised which will potentially significantly impact the ICT utilised in ICS
- lack of clarity around future strategy.

Objective

Early in 2010, BCC identified a desire to modernise its ICS provision and consequently this project aimed to:

- improve how customer insight was used, to help support location planning and service delivery,
- ensure that front line public services were delivered efficiently
- improve access for local people and better address their needs and priorities.

The customer insight project would allow BCC to better understand the needs of the citizens of Bristol by looking at the services they currently use and the channels they access these on. By looking at customer segmentation data BCC aimed to better understand their different customer groups, and by using customer journey mapping they set out to understand the current service provision from the customers' perspective.

This project also intended to focus specifically on the vulnerable members of society in the wards of Knowle, Lawrence Weston and Fishponds and sought to better engage with some of the lesser known migrant communities including the Polish and Somali communities to ensure the service provision supported those most in need.

To achieve these aims the project set the following objectives:

- to enhance customer service and reduce repeat contact through greater customer insight, enabling the right combination of services with other public service organisations in deprived areas of Bristol, particularly Knowle, Fishponds and Lawrence Weston tailored to these communities
- to increase customer understanding and process development through customer journey mapping
- to develop insight into migrant ethnicity, such as Polish and Somali communities and understand how their service needs may differ from the wider society
- to utilise geo-demographic tools, internal customer data and customer research to redesign service provision to meet the needs of the people of Bristol, particularly focussed around the needs of the vulnerable members of society

- to develop internal skills and training in customer insight techniques which are transferable to a range of service areas
- to produce internally and externally commissioned work in customer insight, where requests have already been received from internal departments such as landlord services and housing benefits.



Approach

Customer Journey Maps

Customer Journey Maps were created for 10 different processes (each one covering a different service) working with a local research company, to provide a basis for service improvement. In order to fully test the idea of Customer Journey Mapping and its applicability a diverse range of services from across the council, where customer contact is important, were analysed:

- housing benefits – change of circumstances
- primary school admissions
- council tax: moving into or within an area
- first contact assessment and care provision
- concessionary fares
- repairs
- applications for rehousing and moving in
- presenting as homeless
- reporting anti social behaviour and hate crime
- registration of bereavement.

For each service three or four individual customers were selected for interview. They were selected according to the service they had recently used and to cover a range of personal circumstances. Interviews with service users were completed by telephone. The staff involved in mapping these journeys were also interviewed but on a face to face basis and some of their comments are included under Findings.

Geographical analysis

BCC developed a Location Planning Toolkit which utilised internal and external customer data and segmentation tools to undertake a geographical analysis of a range of council service users.

The customer information was taken from a range of sources and then matched at household level, to provide a more complete picture of service use. This information was then mapped and the location information of current service users was compared to show their proximity to customer service points. The resulting data tables and maps form the toolkit which service providers can use to understand how both current and projected requirements and provision are matched geographically.

BCC also created a matching code in Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) which creates a property reference irrespective of whether a Universal Property Reference Number (UPRN) exists or not. This is designed to be flexible enough for use directly on server databases or simple data extracts.

Vulnerability study

The measurement of vulnerability can be quite subjective and is certainly classified differently by a number of council departments. In an attempt to identify a standard classification and measurement of vulnerability within Bristol, the project undertook a vulnerability study utilising data from:

- health and social care: as an aid to the emergency services this data set identifies individuals who might be unable to respond to an emergency event without assistance
- housing benefits: this data set identifies claimants of state support
- homelessness service: identifies those who are homeless or in temporary accommodation as a result of homelessness.

This data was analysed, using a range of data elements to provide a geographical picture of vulnerability at postcode level across Bristol.

The results from the study were also compared to the indices of multiple deprivation which, take into account the following separate dimensions of deprivation:

- income deprivation
- employment deprivation
- health deprivation and disability
- education, skills and training deprivation
- barriers to housing and services
- crime
- living environment deprivation.

Ethnicity study

BCC has used the standard Mosaic Public Sector Segments in order to analyse data in the past however, for the Ethnicity Study they decided that they would build on the methodology used in the Vulnerability Study and aimed to provide greater understanding about the potentially “hidden” ethnic groups within Bristol.

The data sets analysed included:

- Single Housing Benefit Extract Database (SHBE) (24,496 Households)
- Children and Young Persons Service’ School Census (March 2011) (39,092 Households)
- Health and Social Care Extract (13,764 Households)
- Northgate Housing Customer Database (Rents, Repairs, Home Choice Bristol (council housing)) (63,446 Households)
- Experian Mosaic Public Sector Segmentation (Types 20 and 42) (3,013 Households).

Using single customer view database technology, the contact history and service request information relating to this sample of households (from a wider set of service datasets, such as telephone and face to

face, CRM systems) were analysed to draw out information on channel preferences, propensity to Self Serve and the service needs of each ethnic group.

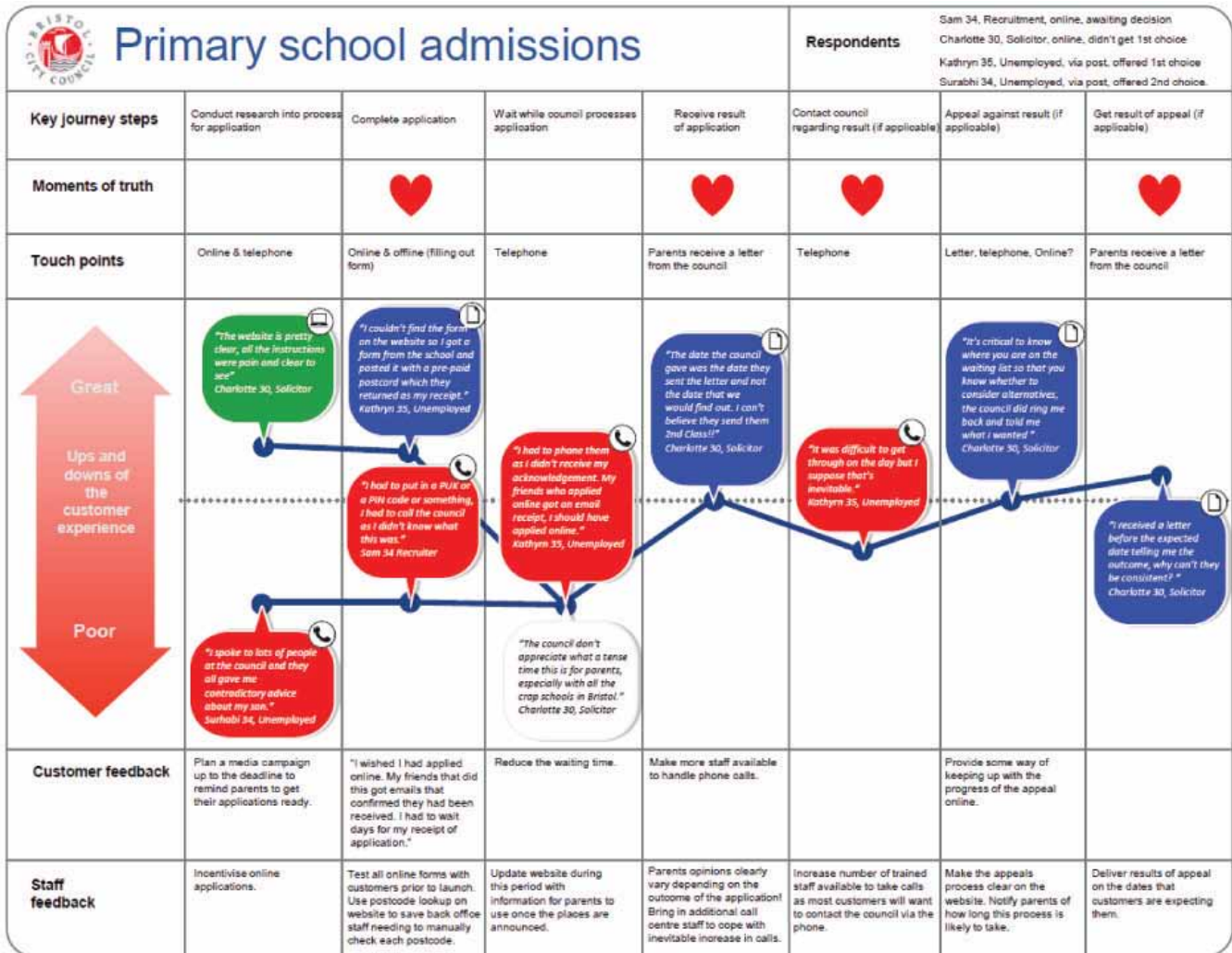
Ethnicity was also analysed against other parameters such as vulnerability classifications and specific customer groups eg council tenants.

Findings

Customer Journey Maps

A series of customer journeys were documented across 10 service areas showing the experiences and opinions of both the individuals going through the process and the staff they were dealing with.

For example:



Staff feedback

The discussions with staff highlighted many issues with the current service arrangements and processes that customers had to follow in order to access these services. The comments made included:

- “Housing officers previously had a patch that they knew inside out but once the service was centralised we lost that local knowledge.”
- “I get so many emails I just can’t keep up with them as well as deal with customers effectively.”
- “Customer communications are often not in plain English.”
- “We need to address the automatic generation of letters. The amount of calls we get from angry and worried customers is ridiculous.”
- “What chance have customers got of understanding our services and processes if we don’t.”
- “Customers having to wait up to 12 weeks for benefits to be adjusted is just ridiculous.”
- “Better information sharing across the council is needed.”

In addition the consultants used to undertake this work performed an analysis of their findings and identified possible improvements. An example follows:

Primary school admissions recommendations

Process

- Provide customers with automated options to receive results of their application eg e mail advice or online account view of the result of their application
- Publish dates that advice will be sent by 2nd class post and likely date that this will be received by parents.
- Provide clearer communications around login details and PUK code to parents to increase take up of online services
- Pre populate online application forms for primary applications and pupils transferring to secondary school. Show parents ‘where they are’ in the application process and allow part completed applications to be stored and modified before submission.
- Overhaul customer contact handling to provide the right balance of automated services for FAQ handling and sufficient ‘front line’ customer adviser resource to deal with customer demand for mediated services at peak times.

Roles & Responsibilities

- Comprehensive list of FAQs for parents / carers and council staff developed and maintained. Published on web site and provided to front line staff.
- Web content correct and up to date
- The council and schools champion the online application process for school starters and transfers including promoting flexibility and convenience of this channel and faster notification via email.
- Council and schools promote free internet access points at Libraries and other community locations (including schools themselves?) and provide workshops / self serve support to parents and carers who need it.

Technology

- Provide more automated channels for customers to have frequently asked questions answered eg IVR for people who contact us by telephone and web/ interactive TV content linked to BCC website search engine or ‘pushed’ to the customer when they ask a FAQ or use a key word.
- Create an online account for parents to make and view applications/appeals and gain updates or status checks along the way. This should include pre population of forms, address look-ups and intuitive guides to help customers follow processes easily.
- Generate a clean dataset showing an accurate picture of children attaining school age and secondary school transfer.
- Provide text and e mail alerts to customers when their application or appeal status changes or tasks are due (eg submit application and choices)

‘Best in the business’

- Through links with other departments and teams, Bristol city council has clean and accurate data showing children attaining primary and secondary school age or moving into / within/ out of the Bristol area. This is used proactively to promote and plan the service offering.
- Bristol City Council has a coordinated media campaign that provides clear guidance and information to parents so that they make timely submissions for school places, transfers and appeals.
- Bristol city council has a comprehensive online offering (in addition to more traditional channels) that provides a simple application and appeal process and online account view for tracking and updating on progress / results.
- Bristol City Council provides seasonal response to customer demand with mediated customer adviser support for targeted areas of the citizen base.

Ethnicity study

The ethnicity study identified the following major ethnic groups:

BCC Ethnicity Summary Groups	No Households in Sample	%	% of Bristol Households	ONS Est. Population	%
Asian / Asian British	3,261	5%	-	28,800	7%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	4,479	7%	-	14,200	3%
Mixed / Multiple Ethnic groups	2,795	4%	-	10,600	2%
Other Ethnic Groups*	6	0%	-	4,800	1%
White	57,761	85%	-	374,700	87%
Total	68,302	100%	36%	433,100	100%

*The “other ethnic groups” classification was disregarded from further analysis since numbers were so low.


The non-white ethnic groups were analysed according to Mosaic classifications with the following results:

5.2.1 Rank order of the most dominant Mosaic Groups in our sample for BME communities (Top 8)

Mosaic Groups (Top 8)	Grand Total	Percentage
I - Lower income workers in urban terraces in often diverse areas <i>'The primary Mosaic Group for BME communities – predominantly Asian'</i>	2,631	25.6%
N - Young people renting flats in high density social housing <i>'The highest group for Black African & Caribbean communities'</i>	1,995	19.3%
G - Young, well-educated city dwellers <i>'Often containing new BME residents living in cheaper student areas'</i>	1,439	13.9%
K - Residents with sufficient incomes in right-to-buy social houses <i>'BME communities in ex council properties'</i>	1,052	10.2%
J - Owner occupiers in older-style housing in ex-industrial areas <i>'Established & stable BME communities who have moved to more affluent areas'</i>	816	7.9%
H - Couples and young singles in small modern starter homes <i>'Young BME families with incomes to support home ownership'</i>	632	6.1%
O - Families in low-rise social housing with high levels of benefit need <i>'The most isolated and state dependent BME communities'</i>	619	6.0%
E - Middle income families living in moderate suburban semis <i>'BME professionals with families'</i>	584	5.6%

The characteristics of these groups were then described in some detail:

40 Multi-ethnic communities in newer suburbs away from the inner city



Key Features

- Range of ages
- Terraces
- Moderate unemployment
- Local independent shops
- Unlikely to travel
- Private renting
- Highly multicultural
- More crowded housing

Communication Preferences


Access Information
SMS Text and National Papers

Not Face to Face

Service Channels
Internet, Telephone and Mobile Phone

Not Face to Face

66 Childless, low income tenants in high rise flats



Key Features

- Young singles, no children
- Low educational attainment
- Unemployment
- High rise blocks
- High levels of deprivation
- Second hand goods
- TV
- Charity shops

Communication Preferences

Access Information
Face to Face and National Papers

Not Internet, Telephone, Interactive TV

Service Channels
Face to Face

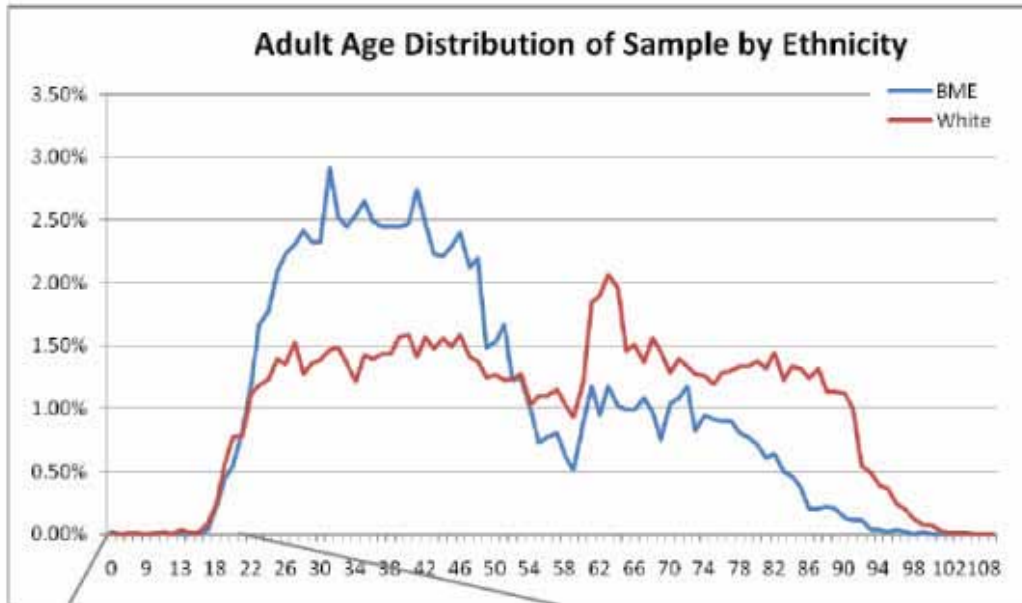
Not Internet, Telephone, Mobile Phone or Post

The results of the analysis were mapped to show geographic groupings. For example:



They were also analysed to show other features such as age distribution:

6.1 Adult and child age distribution of sample by All ethnicities (BME v White)



Communication channel preferences were also analysed in detail to inform future communication strategies. The analysis is quite detailed but shows some headline findings – eg black afro-caribbeans are least likely to self serve via the internet.

Vulnerability report

The three data sets were each analysed in some detail. For example:

Section 1 – Analysis of Data source 1

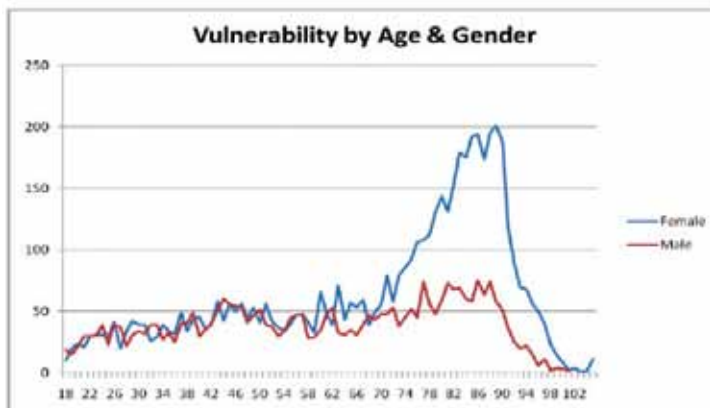
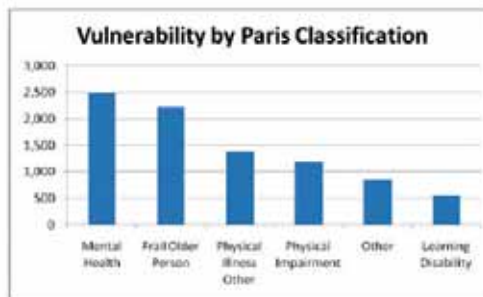
Vulnerable Customers identified by Health and Social Care

1.1 Classification:

The HSC list has identified 8,689 individuals (relating to 8,278 households) who are extremely vulnerable with the following service user classification.

Paris Classification

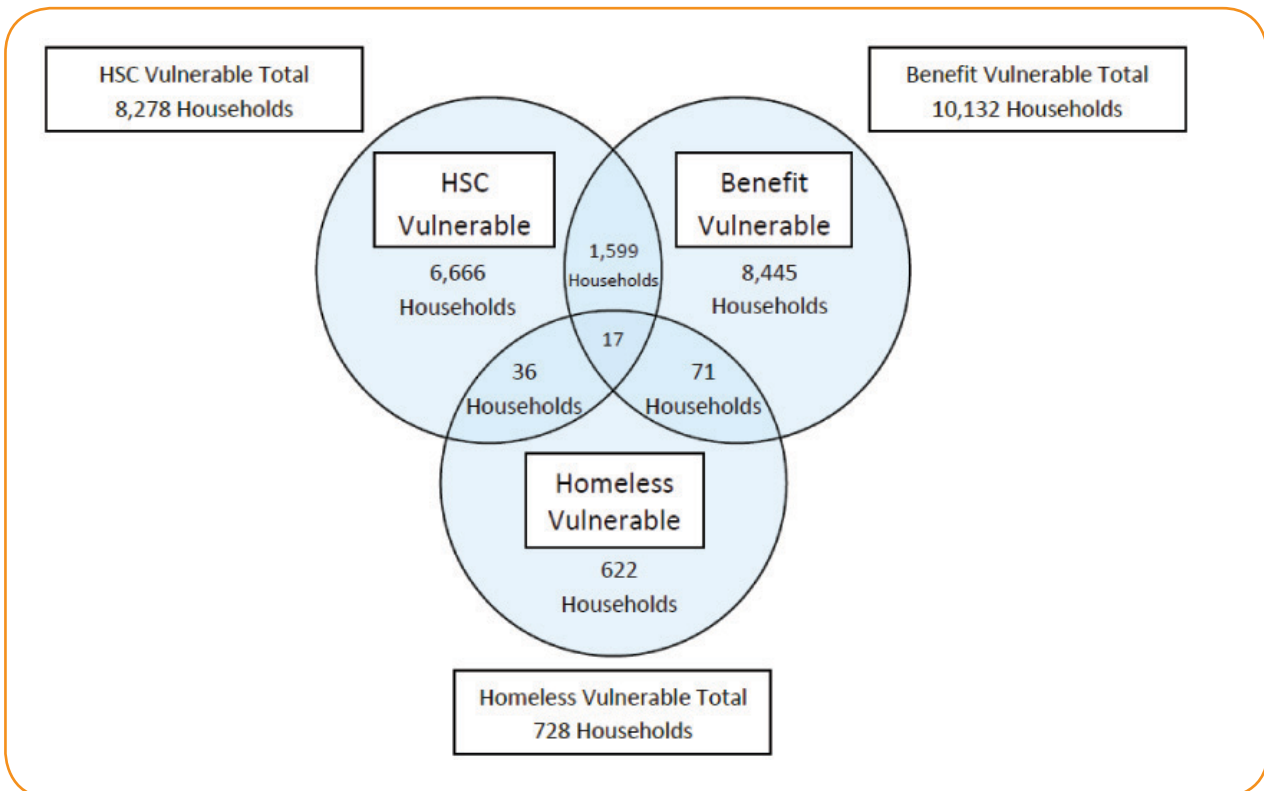
- 29% are listed as 'Mental Health'
- 25% are listed as 'Frail Older Person'
- 16% are listed as 'Physical Illness Other'
- 14% are listed as 'Physical Impairment'
- 10% are listed as 'Other'
- 6% are listed as 'Learning Disability'



The Mosaic Segment classifications for these vulnerable individuals are as follows:

Mosaic Groups (Top 8)	Grand Total	Percentage
G - Young, well-educated city dwellers <i>'Often living in cheaper student areas'</i>	1,396	19.08%
M - Elderly people reliant on state support <i>'Frail Older Person'</i>	1,261	17.24%
K - Residents with sufficient incomes in right-to-buy social houses <i>'Have remained in their property with outside assistance'</i>	1,037	14.18%
J - Owner occupiers in older-style housing in ex-industrial areas <i>'Often disabled who have retired early'</i>	888	12.14%
I - Lower income workers in urban terraces in often diverse areas <i>'If able to work, completing minimum wage manual labour'</i>	863	11.80%
E - Middle income families living in moderate suburban semis <i>'Possibly living with the support of friends or family'</i>	662	9.05%
O - Families in low-rise social housing with high levels of benefit need <i>'Includes secure accomodation or low grade retirement properties'</i>	605	8.27%
N - Young people renting flats in high density social housing <i>'Possibly council owned tower blocks'</i>	603	8.24%

However, the three sets were also compared and contrasted and an overall view of the vulnerable citizen base taken:



This work led the customer insight team to conclude that a standard approach to classifying and measuring vulnerability did not exist and that this hampered efforts to understand and work with this segment of the citizen base. Consequently, the team has developed an overarching Vulnerability Model.

Outcomes

Location Planning Toolkit

The geographical analysis of the customer insight data from this project was used to produce a Location Planning Toolkit. This consists of a set of 32 maps which are used to provide a visual interpretation of the data and to support the council's decision making process.

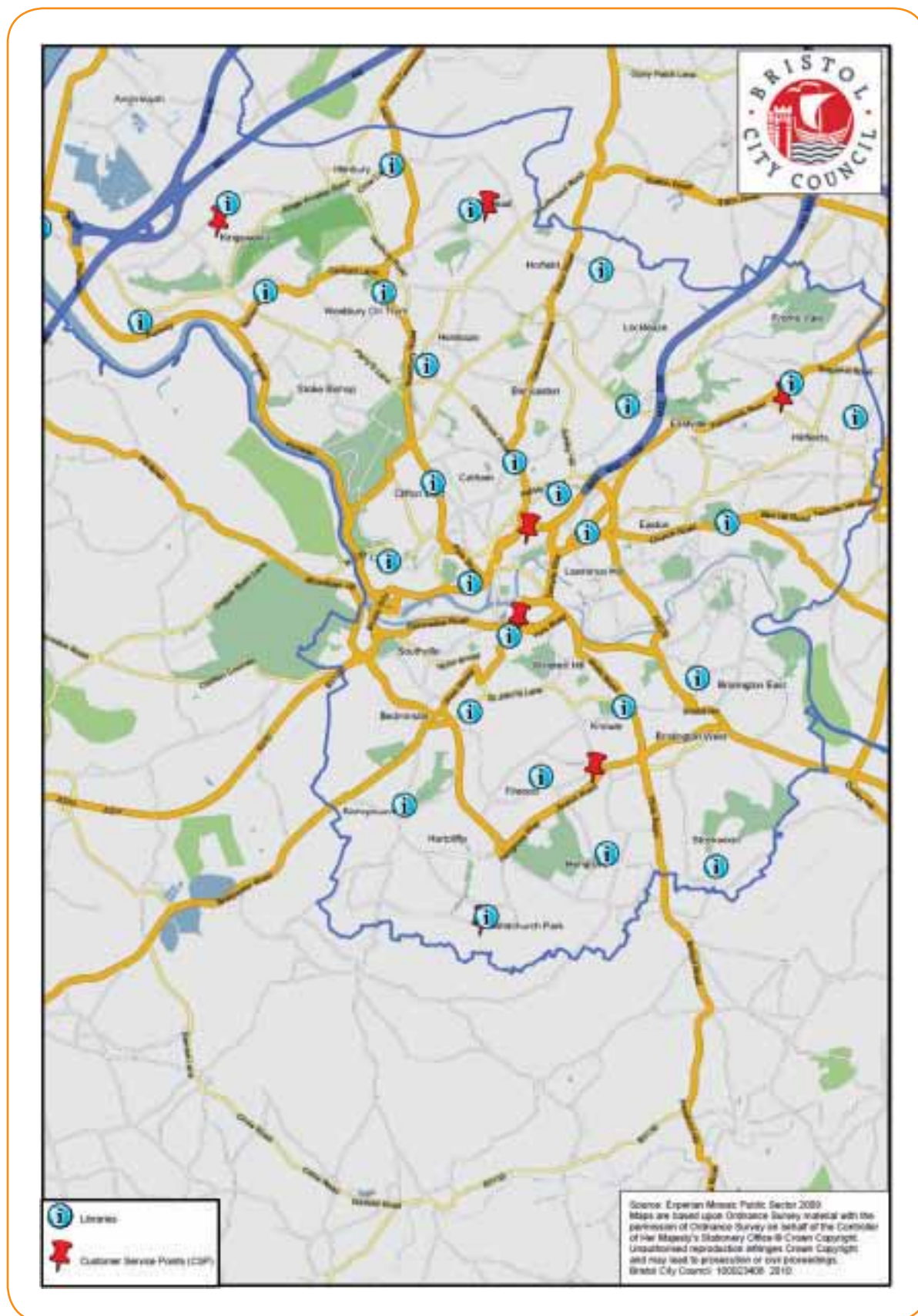
The maps include:

- The location of service outlets, including:
 - customer service points
 - libraries
 - schools
 - police stations
 - hospitals, GP surgeries and NHS walk-in centres
 - retail centres.
- service maps such as bus networks
- access patterns - showing where the people accessing a service outlet are from
- areas of deprivation
- the location of a range of vulnerable individuals (eg elderly, disabled, mental health issues, etc) known to:
 - health and social care
 - customer services
 - benefit services
 - homeless services
- BME communities
- households with internet access.

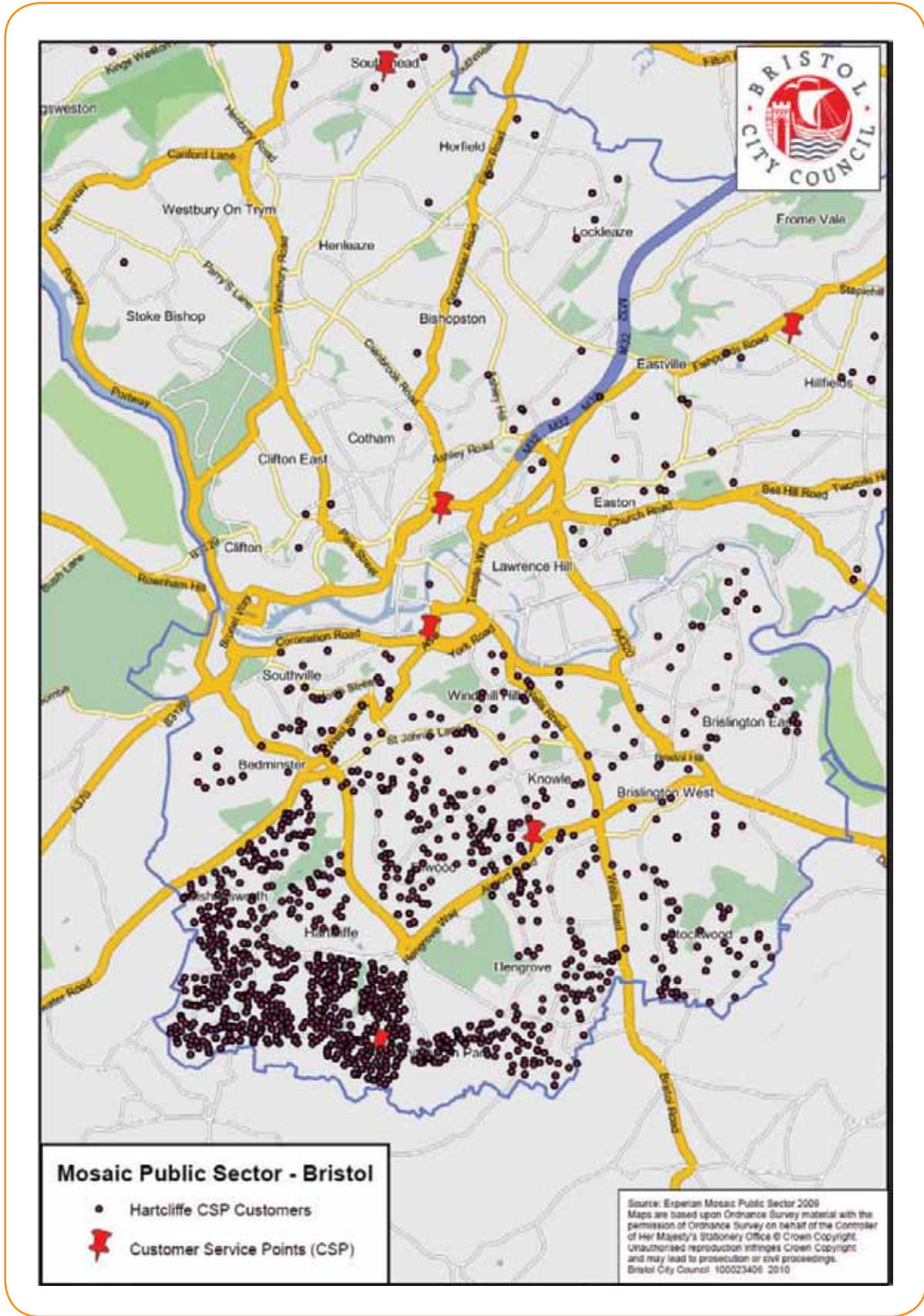
Associated with these maps is a user manual explaining how they can be used.

Some examples follow.

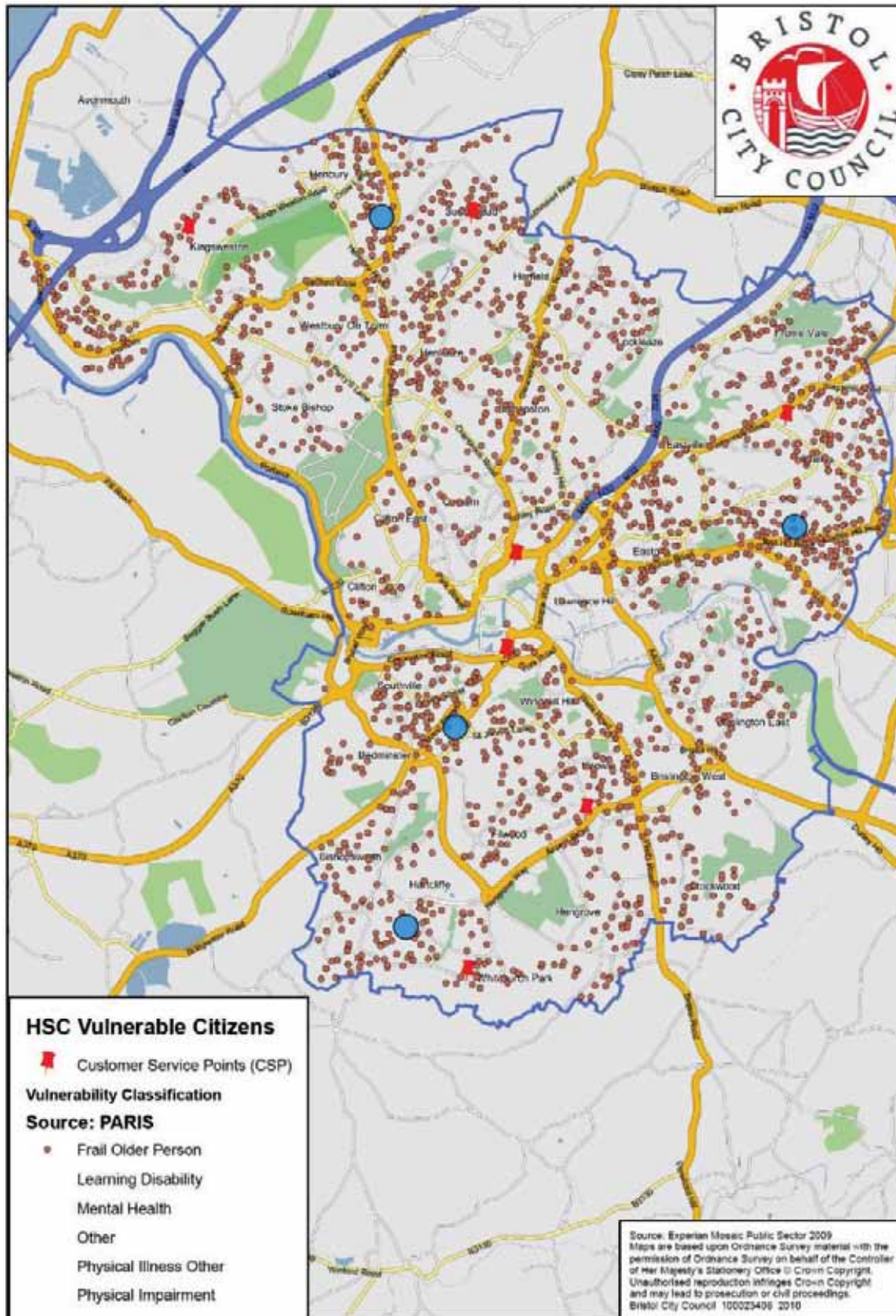
Location of libraries:



Customers using Hartcliffe Customer Service Point:



Location of vulnerable citizens:



Review of customer services

A review of the council's customer service provision was undertaken based on the customer insight generated by this project. The overall objective was to review and then rationalise the council's frontline contact points.

The analysis highlighted that the current arrangements did not meet the needs of local people and therefore the council has re-organised the face-to-face provision. One face to face service point, Ridingleaze, has been re-designated as a self service point, and another in Fishponds, has been substantially refurbished and re-opened merged with a library.

The aim was also to make access better and therefore reduce the need for multiple contacts. In this way costs could be eliminated by removing avoidable contact and shifting some services to cheaper, but often more convenient channels for those customers that were willing and able to access the internet or use the telephone.



Robinson House,
Fishponds customer service point

Ridingleaze was redesignated as self service centre on the basis of low usage together with an analysis of the customer base and types of transactions undertaken there. Fishponds however is a busy CSP, and when

the nearby library had to be closed because of building issues, it was quickly recognised that combining two facilities would have benefits both financially and in terms of customer service.

This rationalisation work is part of a newly agreed strategy to modernise customer services in line with the objectives and findings of this project. This Modernisation of Customer Services Programme was concluded on time and to budget at 31st March 2012, which resulted in channel shift from 6 per cent to 20 per cent of services delivered via self service and a move away from face to face services.

Staff involved in the service have been positive about the change:

Debra Brice, a CSP team manager, commented that:

“The joint service is much calmer than the usual stand alone CSP, with customers having an overall better experience – and it’s a nicer working environment too”.

Kate Murray, Service Manager from Libraries, says:

“Fishponds has been an excellent example of co locating two services that serve the same customer in different ways. We have grown our visitors and helped “soften” the atmosphere of a sole customer service point. We have worked very well as a team with staff on the ground who are concerned about serving the customer and not precious about who is using what service. It has modernised the library service that had been delivered from an increasingly redundant, but quaint building.”

Vulnerability model

The findings from this project have led to the development of a single standardised vulnerability model. This brings together vulnerability information from a range of data sets and merges it to provide an overall vulnerability score (so that the most vulnerable can be targeted). This helps staff across the organisation better identify vulnerable customers and as a result facilitates the task of signposting vulnerable people to other services where they are currently unknown.

This was used to make the decision about converting Ridingleaze to self service customer access point, and shutting two CSPs which were not meeting the needs of these customers.

The vulnerability work demonstrated that only 9 per cent of customers who used Customer Services could be deemed vulnerable. Hence, 91 per cent were categorised as not vulnerable and this process could be used to shift those that are happy to self serve onto other channels and then focus support where it was most needed.

Information about how people accessed services and for what purpose was cross referenced to other information. This included information about transport links, the physical state of buildings, other council facilities and other customer data. This provided valuable evidence on which to base difficult decisions about closures.

Core services that are straight forward will be largely self serve for those customers able to use them. This frees resources to use on targeted services, via the telephone or in person, which will be more holistic and proactive in nature and will provide assistance for customers less able to use self serve and transactions that are more complex.

The vulnerability work has also been used to further the thinking on both the corporate target operating model and the Customer and Process Programme, so that a revised approach is being proposed with core and targeted services based on vulnerability.

Ethnicity study

The findings from this project have provided a vital tool in terms of service planning, especially when completing equalities impact assessments, where previously recommendations had been based on 2001 Census information and therefore were now out of date.

It has also been used to populate ethnicity information for services which do not have complete ethnicity records.

Bristol City Council was awarded an “excellent” in 2011 against the Equalities Framework for Local Government, and the ethnicity work was helpful in achieving this award as it demonstrated a deep knowledge of the city and the ability to use information appropriately in service planning.

The savings targets that all councils have to make have been accompanied by Equalities Impact Assessments. These have been easier to do and more complete as a result of the ethnicity study. Savings and efficiencies are therefore better targeted and considered.

Benefits

Operational benefits

This project has enabled the council to deliver better services that are more accessible to the public and are more efficient.

The changes have been achieved with modest increases in customer satisfaction identified in the annual customer survey:

The remodelling of services and how these are accessed in response to the use of customer insight has resulted in a shift to where customers are now served in ways and at locations that are acceptable to and/or preferred by them.

This redesign together with the associated channel shift, has allowed the council to achieve total efficiency savings of £1.2m p.a. within 18 months. This is as a result of staff

	2010/2011	2011/2012
Very satisfied	42%	43%
Satisfied	39%	39%
Neutral	9%	11%
Dissatisfied	4%	3%
Very dissatisfied	6%	5%

Customer comments have also been positive, with many new library members coming from existing CSP customers. Children of CSP visitors are able to play and read in the safety of the library facilities whilst their parents and carers deal with their CSP transactions.

savings and these can be allocated as 28 per cent due to channel shift to self service (reducing telephone contact centre staff), 43 per cent are a reduction in face to face services, and 29 per cent staff savings due to improved processes.

Mr Dillbach Singh, "I think it's much better, nicer atmosphere."

Mrs Elaine Kelly, "I think its a really good idea - I have used the library here, I have never used a library before"

Mrs Ali, "I think it is good – I bring my children here on a Saturday as well."

Mrs Anita Smith, "I am conscious of the noise that my children make now, but I like the idea of reading something whilst waiting to be seen."

Mr Younas El Boukili El Makhoukhi, "It is much better than the office in town – better atmosphere and nice staff. It is good to have books around – it encourages people to read and educate themselves."

Mrs Aziz, "I like it – I used to use the library in Muller road, but I prefer to come here as it is light and airy"

A local Mum praised it as being: "Really welcoming, clean and bright – I'll now be coming with my child for story times."



In addition, savings resulted from the closure of two CSPs, as well as improving processes and channel shifting. Direct savings of £379K per annum in staff costs were realised by reducing face to face services and moving transactions to self serve or telephones for those customer more able to carry out their business with the council this way.

The merger of a library and a CSP will have on going savings as overall head costs are reduced and shared. Maintenance costs on the old library building will generate a saving of £15,700 per annum (2010/11 cost).

In addition, there was an estimated £150,000 needed to bring the old library building up to standard – this projected cost will be replaced with a capital receipt from the sale of the old library site.

Other savings came from the shift to self serve enabling a reduction in telephony staff, as well as taking out a management layer (2 further posts).

The combined library and customer service facility has been popular with customers, with the library benefiting from new members from traditional customer service customers (see comments above).

Improvements to Housing Benefit performance from a reduction in avoidable contacts and successful channel shifting also generated savings equivalent to two full time staff – ie £56,000 per annum. Housing Benefits can now be claimed, and change of circumstances notified, online. Take up for new claims is now at 25 per cent of all claims, enabling customers to claim at a time that suits them.

A total of 400 new claim transactions a month migrated from telephone to web, and 1500 queries migrated from telephone to web for the housing benefit service, at a cost of approximately £7 per face to face transaction, £3 for a telephone transaction and less than £1 for a self service transaction, these generated savings of over £45,000 per annum. In addition there are significant savings still to be realised.

The reduction in the number of telephone calls has also meant less pressure on telephone staff, so that those customers that now use the telephone to make or update their claim and, as evidenced by the customer satisfaction figures above, now receive a better service than previously.

Advice agencies and the public have positively commented on the performance improvement of the housing benefits department, and it is helping create capacity for forward planning for welfare reform changes.



Strategic benefits

Julia James, Director of Integrated Customer Services:

“The One Place project has had a great impact. It has given us the credibility and evidence on which we could base the strategic decisions needed to reconfigure, modernise and improve our customer services.”

The Vulnerability Study was a major step forward for the council because for the first time they were able to accurately quantify and analyse the level of vulnerability in Bristol using a standardised approach to the information captured across multiple services, where previously services were basing their recommendations purely from their own data.

Strategically it has moved the customer service debate forward markedly, so that there is now a corporate agreement that a “one size fits all” approach is unsuitable, and that resources can be targeted effectively at key individuals, groups or communities that are deemed vulnerable or at risk of becoming so without some preventative work. This has helped the difficult discussions around making savings and the most effective way to maintain services and achieve corporate objectives.

Julia James, Director of Integrated Customer Services:

“As a result of this work we can now channel resources to those customers that need greater care, are vulnerable and need more help.”

The customer debate has also recognised the need for a far more holistic approach to customers, so that for example an estates manager, social worker, repair operative or parks officer can all take a more holistic approach to customer service and care, joining services up and signposting customers more effectively for their shared customers.

This approach will be refined to enable, for example, one financial assessment for a customer that captures and then shares information across the authority, or an approach to debt, where the customer has one account with the Council rather than several.

Customer insight

Customer insight techniques and ideas are being utilised to inform service re-design work in housing benefits and council tax sections of the council.

The council has recognised the benefits of using CI and consequently has invested in the CI team. It has been built up from 1 to 4 people and is now acting as a corporate centre of excellence to promote and use CI across the council. Universal projects such as Welfare Reform now have a dedicated corporate resource, which has the capability to assess impacts across all support areas (internal and external).

This team has already delivered early “Impact Assessment “ work on welfare reform, mapping the cumulative effect of benefits cuts on key groups such as large families, single parents, the disabled and pensioners, as well as how the cuts will impact in different parts of the city.

Using this information, task groups are being set up to design and implement suitable policies and services on specific issues such as digital skills, employment, debt advice and housing issues in response.

It has also enabled Bristol to start conversations with partners such as advice agencies about taking a coordinated approach across the city for the future of face to face services, as well as plans to develop a consistent offering in relation to debt advice and financial planning services.

Governance

The project was run according to standard Prince2 principles. There was a project manager and sponsor, with the usual project protocols and controls.

The project manager reported to the service director for integrated customer services. Through her, the project reported up to the senior leadership team (ie the chief executive and strategic directors). The senior leadership team is of course accountable to cabinet.

Elected members were not formally involved in the governance, but they were briefed through the executive briefing process. Back bench politicians were also informed via the scrutiny process. Councillors were able to use the information to inform their decision making.

The work was discussed as it developed across the organisation as a result of data gathering and analysis, and the final results were taken to the senior leadership team as well as to the corporate equalities committee.



Resourcing

Customer Journey Mapping	15,000
Migrant ethnicity research and consultation	15,000
Mosaic Segmentation Analysis	10,000
Customer consultations	5,000
Analysis of service usage data	10,000
Total	55,000



Challenges and lessons learnt

Problems were experienced in getting data from other parts of council. Officers that controlled this data did not always see the benefits of releasing it to others, even within the council. They were concerned about how the information would be used and whether they would fall foul of legislation such as the Data Protection Act. There were also issues with data quality and differing data formats (household level or output areas for example).

To address these concerns the council is now aligning information sharing protocols to enable a corporate view of information to be taken and to facilitate the future sharing of information. The upgrading of systems from silo based ones to corporate ones is enabling this, as well as a project to explore a citizen's account with a single sign on for customers. The council is now looking to utilise this further by working on an information management strategy and data warehousing model, to ensure these benefits are maintained.

The use of evidence and intelligence in this manner has enabled the "Intelligent Council" Programme, which is not only about data quality and sharing, but a cultural shift to a more proactive use of data and intelligence to plan and deliver services. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2012 covering health and council data is a good example of this depth of information.

The CI team were originally embedded within customer services, but their value to the whole organisation has been recognised and they now sit in marketing and communications as a corporate resource.

Next steps

The momentum achieved in this programme has led to the creation of the Customer and Process Programme, recognising that a new corporate approach to customer service is needed.

The Customer and Process Programme is one of a portfolio of transformation programmes. A corporate customer service strategy will be a key deliverable, where there will be a greater degree of differentiation of customers depending on levels of vulnerability and complexity of transactions.

In addition it will look to treat customers holistically and use life events to shape

service delivery around customer needs. This will build on the Customer Insight work and develop it further, so that we have better data about customers to design and implement these services effectively. It will enable BCC to target resources more effectively, and improve customer service and satisfaction.

The council will continue to expand on this project in a number of ways – for example, to develop a vulnerability score across all databases loaded into the data warehouse.

The council will also look to utilise these tools in current and future projects such as welfare reform impact assessments, local sustainable transport planning, citizen engagement and channel shift, and resource allocation.







Local Government Association

Local Government House

Smith Square

London SW1P 3HZ

Telephone 020 7664 3000

Fax 020 7664 3030

Email info@local.gov.uk

www.local.gov.uk

© Local Government Association, December 2012

For a copy in Braille, larger print or audio, please contact us on 020 7664 3000. We consider requests on an individual basis.