

**Responses to questions from councillors requiring a written response
9 September 2024**

CQ9

Question asked by Councillor Maria Joannou of the Chair of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

Could the Committee Chair give an update on the Committee's decision to make a referral to the Secretary of State regarding the loss of the Nottingham Centre for Trauma, Resilience and Growth?

As Councillor Joannou was not present at the Council meeting to ask this question, it received the following written response:

Councillor Georgia Power replied as follows:

Regulation 23 requires relevant NHS bodies and health service providers to consult a local authority about any proposal which they have 'under consideration' for a substantial development of or variation in the provision of health services in the local authority's area. The closure of the Centre for Trauma Resilience and Growth (CTRG) came to the Committee's attention when looking at an ongoing item on the provision of psychological therapy. When questioned about this a Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) representative said the CTRG had closed because "some people received a very good service but those who didn't access the CTRG don't". It is the Committee's view that all patients deserve to receive the best service and this is not an acceptable reason for closure. The ICB asked to meet with me, as Chair, and the Vice Chair of the Committee before referring it to the Secretary of State, which we offered to do on many occasions. However, whilst we have now met with them, it took four months to arrange that meeting due to the ICB's failure to respond to multiple letters. Having had conversations with people who knew the services offered by the CTRG well, we were able to provide the ICB clear evidence of how this has changed. It is also clear that there is a significant gap in provision for trauma support, with the ICB offering that there is a two year waiting list for sexual violence counselling in Nottinghamshire due to the increasing needs of patient to receive longer treatment packages. It is the Committee's view that this is not the fault of patients who need longer treatment, but inappropriately commissioned services which are not meeting the needs of Nottinghamshire residents. The ICB does not accept the Committee's view that there has been a substantial variation in service and we do not accept the ICB's view that there hasn't. As the ICB has closed the CTRG without consultation there was no room for us to negotiate further therefore the Committee agreed to make the referral. Other issues have been identified as a result of this work, including provision for victims and survivors of sexual violence and domestic abuse, refugees and asylum seekers, veterans, people who experience traumatic loss or those who witness or experience traumatic events - though this list is not exhaustive. The Committee is considering how it can look at the provision for people who need trauma related support in Nottingham City further.

Question asked by Councillor Andrew Rule requesting a written response from the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education

Could the Executive Member provide a breakdown of the total fines for unauthorised school absences imposed by the Council over the last three years and confirm how these penalties have been utilised by the Council?

Councillor Cheryl Barnard replied as follows:

Fine income breakdown for the last three years:

Year Total

2021/22	51,267.84
2022/23	127,629.00
2023/24	148,260.00
2024/25	65,100.00

The Education Welfare and Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) Service provide the statutory function of administering, processing and enforcing fixed penalty fines for unauthorised absence from school. The money collected from these fines is restricted to 'The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 Item - 23.—(1) The functions of a local education authority specified for the purposes of section 444A(6)(1) of the 1996 Act and section 105(5) of the 2006 Act are issuing and enforcing penalty notices, and prosecuting recipients who do not pay.(2) To the extent that sums received by a local education authority are not used for the purposes of the functions specified in paragraph (1), they must be paid to the Secretary of State.

The Council's transformation team designed a new system which makes the issuance of penalty notices much more efficient and also increases the ease of payment, which has increased the payment rate to 83%. Because of this, the income from penalty notices significantly increased in 2022/23 and this has been sustained.

Overachieved income from penalty notices has been placed in reserves which allows it to be used retrospectively by Education Welfare for duties around the issuance of penalty notices and prosecution of parents for non-payment.

An increase in the number of fines issued means the current legal team in the service are unable to manage the increased workload and the reserves will be used to increase the size and capacity of the team. An additional Legal Intervention Officer has been recruited to the team. An additional Education Welfare Specialist role is also being recruited to, with a specific focus on preparing the legal documentation required for prosecutions.

In an attempt to address the national decline in school attendance, the Department for Education has recently increased the fine amounts and also made it easier for schools to pursue a fixed penalty notice for poor attendance. If the team see a sustained level of income this financial year, the Council will follow the same process where funds are put in reserves and then used to staff the team. This will be a balance between ensuring the legal team are sufficiently staffed, and undertaking more proactive work with families to reduce persistent absence and engage children in learning.

WQ2

Question asked by Councillor Kevin Clarke requesting a written response from the Executive Member for Finance and Resources

Could the Executive Member provide a breakdown of the total number of calls to the Council's customer service hotline by month over the last three years; together with the average wait time for a call to be answered, the number of calls that led to a successful outcome and the number of aborted calls?

Councillor Linda Woodings replied as follows:

Below is three years' Customer Hub phone data on a month by month basis.

Our strategy is to convert traditional telephony contact to digital wherever possible and whilst customers are on hold, a message is played advising that the process they are waiting for can be managed online. We therefore encourage call abandonment so do not use it as a performance metric as call abandonment rates can be seen as a positive performance indicator as well as a negative one. Any comparison would be drawn against our channel shift data which for general transactional services is currently 82%. What this means is that only 18% of our contact into the Customer Hub is through telephony. This is a positive indicator because our digital processes run end to end – requests go straight into the back office system – and therefore are much more cost effective to deliver. Additionally, satisfaction rates with our online processes are extremely high, averaging 91%.

Demand peaks in the summer months generally, and historically in the Hub a flexible staffing model has been operated to accommodate managing peaks and troughs efficiently. However, there is a staffing saving for 2024/25 which has been achieved, but which required the service to reduce numbers within a short time frame to meet the budget reduction. This coincided with the introduction of the new Garden Waste scheme and the additional demand had not been accounted for. This resulted in a significant increase in telephone demand into the Hub which the newly reduced team could not meet. However, channel shift for the Garden Waste subscription scheme is 92% so only 8% of our customers subscribed by telephone (to date 30644 online subscriptions compared with 2672 telephone requests). Customers who called were directed to our online provision and this will account for a large number of abandoned calls.

The AI telephony solution will go live in October and in the interim period, additional resources have been redirected to support the telephone provision.

Year	Month	Total Calls	Answered Calls	Abandoned Calls	Average Wait Time
	Sep	17419	11222	6197	00:04:48
	Oct	12742	11270	1472	00:01:16
	Nov	12143	11355	788	00:00:37
	Dec	11521	10394	1127	00:01:11
2022	Jan	12192	10919	1273	00:01:08
	Feb	13317	11498	1819	00:01:37
	Mar	14834	12486	2348	00:01:42
	Apr	12783	10971	1812	00:01:32
	May	14106	11993	2113	00:01:35
	Jun	13980	10719	3261	00:02:48
	Jul	13989	10499	3490	00:03:14
	Aug	14755	10581	4174	00:04:08
	Sep	13451	11057	2394	00:02:12
	Oct	11613	10873	740	00:00:37
	Nov	11947	10644	1303	00:01:13
	Dec	9410	8460	950	00:01:10
2023	Jan	11722	10111	1611	00:01:41
	Feb	11052	9305	1747	00:01:54
	Mar	13835	10982	2853	00:02:23
	Apr	11293	9442	1851	00:01:59
	May	13725	11801	1924	00:01:34
	Jun	16971	13060	3911	00:03:13
	Jul	13281	11169	2112	00:01:58
	Aug	13234	11507	1727	00:01:39
	Sep	14094	10456	3638	00:04:01
	Oct	14056	11007	3049	00:03:01
	Nov	13266	10755	2511	00:02:37
	Dec	10310	8228	2082	00:02:35
2024	Jan	14262	9911	4351	00:04:22
	Feb	11537	8813	2724	00:03:06
	Mar	14033	7741	6292	00:06:50
	Apr	21680	7027	14653	00:15:49
	May	22646	7122	15524	00:19:03
	Jun	19442	6446	12996	00:19:23
	Jul	19577	8347	11230	00:13:39
	Aug	14960	7239	7721	00:10:50

WQ3

Question asked by Councillor Kirsty M Jones requesting a written response from the Executive Member for Housing and Planning

Could the Executive Member provide the total number of calls to the Housing Services Repair Line broken down by month, over the last three years and provide the average wait time for a call to be answered, the number of calls dealt with successfully and the number of aborted calls?

Councillor Jay Hayes replied as follows:

Please find attached repairs calls data.

Abandoned call data – It is important to consider that not all calls that are abandoned are so due to the amount of time a tenant has had to wait, very often a tenant will abandon very quickly and for various reasons, such as listening to our recorded message, then deciding very quickly that they have called the wrong line as an example. The second and important aspect to bear in mind is that the majority of the abandoned calls present themselves to us again and are subsequently answered (telephony reporting provides such data).

Average wait time – these vary by day and by hour and unfortunately the data is corrupted to the extent that we cannot extract situations where we experience telephony system outages which can leave tenants calls in queue with the Customer Service Advisor unable to take the call and the system unable to abandon the call automatically.

Point to Note - The average handle time (AHT) for call centres can vary widely depending on the industry, the complexity of the inquiries, and the specific metrics used by the call centre. However, as of recent industry reports:

- Average Handle Time (AHT) in the UK typically ranges from 4 to 6 minutes for many industries. This includes the time spent speaking to the customer, as well as any after-call work (ACW) required to complete the interaction.

In more specialized or technical sectors, such as IT support or financial services, the AHT can be higher, often exceeding 10 minutes due to the complexity of the issues addressed.

Keep in mind that these numbers are averages, and individual call centres may have significantly different AHTs based on their specific operations and customer needs.

Calls dealt with successfully – having asked for clarification of the question I can update that this would be classed as First Call Resolution. This measure is one we aspire to have in place as our key Contact Centre KPI and work is currently underway to identify how we can best measure this.

Various ways of measurement of First Call Resolution include:

- how many times the same number has had to call into the service within 4 weeks of the first call
- Customer Service Centre call quality monitoring
- Analysis of Complaint/Compliment data
- Analysis of Tenant Satisfaction Measure verbatim feedback
- Introduction of post Customer Service Centre call satisfaction survey asking the tenant if their needs were met on the first call

