

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) launched Self Service in 2011 as an efficient, low cost automated service to provide consistent and accurate information to every caller with 24/7 instant access. The service been a great success in releasing key resources and improving customer satisfaction, whilst making considerable cost and efficiency savings for the council.

### Introduction:

SMBC was struggling to cope with increasing customer demand for Revenues and Benefits services and the associated high volumes of enquiries led to high rates of call abandonment and slow work processing times. Line capacity issues further compounded the resource shortfalls. Main billing and peak recovery were looming, and a new call handling strategy was required to support them through this very busy period.

#### Objectives & Priorities when implementing Self Service:

- A commitment to enhance customer service and reduce complaints across Sandwell MBC's Revenues and Benefits department, without increased associated costs.
- Sandwell MBC wished to introduce a call handling solution that was reliable, simply to use and available 24/7 - to provide a range of accurate information for customers during out of hours.
- It was important that any new system had the proven ability to deliver cashable savings and a rapid return on investment, given the council's steep budget reduction challenges.
- Sandwell MBC required a solution that could eliminate call abandonment and reduce work processing times.
- Self Service needed to cut call queues completely to help Sandwell MBC handle all resident enquiries even during the busiest times of the year.
- Self Service was initially trialed via a six month pilot for Revenues & Benefits to cover main billing. Following a review of the major financial and operational benefits, it has been extended up until 2014.



#### Testimonial:

*'Self Service has played a crucial part in our call handling strategy and we are pleased to announce we will be extending our partnership with Inform Communications for another year. Since implementation the service has answered approximately 23,000 calls per month and successfully retained and resolved 62% of these enquiries, providing the equivalent work of 12 F.T.E's. The cost and efficiency gains we have made within our Revenues and Benefits call centre have been considerable. Coupled with this is the greatly improved 24/7 service to our customers, who can now access Revenues and Benefits information round the clock without waiting in lengthy queues or being told we are closed.'*

**-Ian Hubball, Revenues and Benefits Manager at Sandwell**

#### Operational & Financial benefits:

- ✓ Self Service handles an average of over **23,000 calls** per month, successfully resolving around **62%** of these. This means **only 38%** of incoming enquiries require agent intervention.
- ✓ This equates to the work of **12 FTE's**, making a net value / saving of approximately **£240k p.a.** (after the total cost of Self Service equating to less than 2 FTE's).
- ✓ Self Service implementation saw abandonment rates fall to zero for Revenues and Benefits enquiries, as every call is answered immediately by the system.
- ✓ Self Service allows Sandwell MBC's advisors the time to deal with callers who need direct interaction, either because they are vulnerable or have priority cases that need agent assistance. Work processing times have also been reduced.
- ✓ Customer satisfaction at Sandwell MBC is up as callers can now be certain they will be able to obtain information round the clock, as opposed to trying to phone at busy times with the knowledge that they may need to wait in lengthy queues for information.

#### Demonstration:

Revenues & Benefits Service: 0121 368 / NNDR: 1100 / Council Tax: 1001 / Benefits: 0800  
Visit [Sandwellinfo.latestinfo.co.uk](http://Sandwellinfo.latestinfo.co.uk)